Analysis of the Effectiveness of The National Drought Management Authority (NDMA) Monthly Early Warning Bulletins (February 2021)

Introduction

Drought directly affects the socio-economic development of Kenya through its adverse impacts on various sectors such as food security, livestock, crop, water, education, energy, forestry, wildlife, health, nutrition, peace, and security. Building drought resilience, ensuring adequate preparedness, effective response and recovery from drought shocks call for investment in various enablers such as infrastructure, human capital development, livestock marketing, production and disease control, trade, wealth creation and agriculture. In this regard, there is need for a multi-sectoral approach to ensure efficient and effective drought coordination. Inter-agency and inter-governmental collaboration are critical in facilitating this process and Knowledge management and information sharing is a core function for success.

The National Drought Management Authority (NDMA), under the Ministry of Devolution and ASALs and is the national Authority responsible for drought risk management. NDMA disseminates information from the national drought early warning system to a wide range of stakeholders. As part of their mandate NDMA issues periodical reports on the drought position in the country through regular Early Warning Bulletins (EWB). This informs early action by the national government, county governments, UN agencies, NGOs, and communities, among others. The NDMA's early warning system contributes to other regional early warning initiatives. This report covers the assessment of the bulletins produced by NDMA to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the bulletins to communicate to targeted stakeholders.

Assessment of the Bulletin

The following are the key outcomes of the EWB review:

1. The bulletin is very impressive from an information point of view and is of high quality and informative. It has comprehensive information regarding weather trends; information that is very useful for planning.

2. It is very helpful that reports are specific to the counties. This provides each county with data specific to them that should facilitate appropriate planning.

3. The breakdown of the information is very useful as it addresses specific areas of concern. For example, there are biophysical indicators, socio-economic indicators and so on. This is useful information that breaks the data down to its granular form.

4. The graphic illustrations make it easy to comprehend the data and visualize the indicative direction of the trend.

5. The information on consumption is very useful. This information includes data on prices of commodities including livestock and other farm products. Farmers would find this useful for decision making, pricing of their commodities and planning.

Observable Gaps

1. **Language:** The language of the report is technical and does not lend itself to easy reading and particularly by non-technical people. Due to the technical language used, while the information is important and critical for planning, non-technical readers would find it difficult to relate to the information.

2. **Presentation outlook**: There is a very good effort to present the information in graphical format that should be easy to read. But the overall lay out of the presentation still does not lend itself to easy reading. One must scroll down the page making it cumbersome and not drawing attention to any specific information.

3. It would be helpful to rank the information in order of their importance to draw attention to what is considered as most critical and to draw attention of the reader specifically to it. For example, if a major drought is in the offing, then this should be prominently displayed to draw the attention of the reader to it. A narrative story could lead and then the hard data could follow.

4. As part of the early warning strategy, the bulletin should have a section that draws the audience to action. This section should help the reader know what they should do and how to go about it.

5. This information is important, but it is not clear how it is distributed and possible accessibility by the general population. A better means of dissemination would be important.

6. The audience for these reports would include development partners, national government, and county government, among others. A separate report with only the highlights could be directed towards these publics.

7. There is no provision for a two-way communication. The mechanism for providing feedback has not been given.

Recommendations on Way Forward

1. The stories should be ranked in order of importance to draw attention to them and to the issues that they address.

2. Simplify the language of presentation. We could have a technical section and a general readership section with the general readership section presented as part of the front matter. The technical part would then be specifically for the technical audience.

3. The services of a webmaster with graphic design skills would be essential in making the report presentable. A graphic designer should be brought on board to help with this.

4. Rather than have the report in pdf form in the resource center section, the reports should be brought forward to a more accessible landing pages to draw attention to them. They should also be made easy to navigate.

5. These reports need to be made available to local media for even wider circulation and coverage. There should be a media plan to effect this. The immediate focus should be on local radio stations, where, if possible, a regular magazine could be established to highlight and draw the attention of the people to the reports. A long-term strategy would be to develop NDMA-Community Engagement framework/strategy to ensure the community gets the message in their local languages.

6. The utility of these reports is not limited to the local areas. This information is useful for national planning and thus should be distributed to national policy making audience as well.

7. In terms of content, the bulletins should include an analytic perspective to answer the element of So What-does this mean to implementing partners? To inform the recommended steps of action.