

Report to CLIVAR SSG-18

Panel or Working Group: **Variability of the African Climate System Panel (VACS)**

1. Contributions to developing CLIVAR science and fit, where appropriate, to the CLIVAR imperatives

The VACS panel has been reconstituted as an outcome of CLIVAR SSG-17 under the leadership of R. Washington. The membership has a good mixture of long-standing and new members, and the new direct inclusion of a representative of the development community.

VACS and Climate Services

As the international community plans for climate services, it is important to underline the role, or requirements, of VACS in the provision of these services. How issues and concerns of end users are integrated in the design and to drive research is an important aspect of the provision of climate services. VACS will explore measures to enhance communication between the climate research and user communities to increase inclusiveness and to get feedback on the effectiveness of research in addressing user needs and concerns.

By identifying some key flagship or pilot projects, VACS would demonstrate the value of integrating climate information in policy and mitigation strategies needed to develop a committed community of stakeholders in Africa supporting climate research. A key action that VACS should take is to act as advocates on behalf of the climate science community for research in Africa. Regardless of where the research is physically carried out, the Continent needs to take ownership of research and knowledge on African climate. A key issue related to knowledge ownership across the Continent is the importance of sharing data, such as daily data in accordance with WMO Resolution 40, a message that VACS will pursue in common with ETCCDI.

VACS and Capacity Development

Capacity development is a key aspect of this panel's activities. Ideas on this include raising the awareness and profile of VACS and CLIVAR as a whole with young African scientists and using the VACS website to provide recommendations on scientific rigor, capacity development opportunities and to host a network for African climate scientists. The panel recommends building on the experience of the recent WCRP-WMO-World Bank workshops that went across data, modelling and applications, emphasizing the idea of a continuous flow of information, including how uncertainties grow, and the provision of interdisciplinary information. Various institutions such as the ICTP have developed a capacity development framework that targets young scientists with summer schools and workshops. VACS will explore how it can best enhance and contribute to these activities, for example by maintaining a clearinghouse of all capacity development activities to the community. A VACS newsletter is also being considered.

VACS and Coordination

Numerous coordinated science activities are ongoing in Africa, e.g., the WMO RCOFs, CORDEX, and CLIMDEV. CORDEX will deliver an enormous amount of data and will organize regional workshops to train and coordinate how these data are

analyzed. VACS will align its role in CORDEX in coordination with the CORDEX team. RCOFs provide a platform for integrating climate information with end user information on seasonal timescales. There is the opportunity to exploit this framework for other timescales.

2. Cooperation with other WCRP projects, outside bodies (e.g IGBP) and links to applications

VACS is interacting with the Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS) Program. CCAFS seeks to overcome the threats to agriculture and food security in a changing climate; exploring new ways of helping vulnerable rural communities adjust to global changes in climate. Two of its three areas of initial focus are in Africa: East and West Africa. VACS, through R. Washington, played a role in selecting these African focus regions. There are funding opportunities (calls for 2012) with part of the CCAFS budget being targeted specifically for collaborative work, for example aimed at encouraging interaction between the climate and agriculture development communities. The interpretation of climate science products, relevance for user groups and communication to user groups is very much part of the CCAFS agenda. This is an opportunity for VACS to promote climate science in Africa and in turn to get feedback from the broad CCAFS community to guide climate science. CCAFS has approached VACS to seek guidance on how to integrate the climate research community with CCAFS agenda. A CCAFS workshop is being planned for 9-10 June 2011 in Bonn, Germany, to identify within the published CCAFS strategy those areas that should be prioritized with collaborative effort and then to co-design calls for research for the collaborative part of the CCAFS budget. VACS members with expertise in East and West Africa have been to contribute to the design of the workshop.

See section 1 on cooperation with CORDEX and RCOFs.

3. Workshops/meetings held

4. New activities being planned, including timeline,

See section 1.

A VACS database of African climate research scientists has been initiated to help strengthen and extend the CLIVAR research network in Africa. The database will include information on research topic/region.

A VACS newsletter has been proposed and a first issue will hopefully be compiled after the July 2011 VACS meeting.

These activities will help distribute information on funding and capacity development activities, as well as increase awareness at the international level of research activities that are ongoing, promoting new collaboration opportunities.

5. Workshops/meetings planned (see ANNEX B also)

5th Session of VACS - 11-13 July 2011, Cape Town, South Africa.

VACS will also contribute to the 2nd CORDEX Africa Analysis Team Workshop being held in Cape Town on 4-8 July 2011.

2012 meeting and/or workshop – TBD at the 5th VACS session.

6th Session of VACS and training workshop – 2012 (see Annex B)

6. Issues for the SSG

For discussion at the SSG is the future integration of GEWEX as a co-sponsor of VACS and how VACS will contribute to the WCRP-wide strategy of research coordination, network development and capacity development in Africa.

Annex B

Proforma for CLIVAR Panel and Working Group requests for SSG approval for meetings

Requests should be made through D/ICPO (Robert.Molinari@noc.soton.ac.uk) against the following headings:

1. Panel or Working Group: **VACS**
2. Title of meeting or workshop: **6th Session**
3. Proposed venue: **West Africa**
4. Proposed dates: **2012**
5. Proposed attendees, including likely number:
6. Rationale, motivation and justification, including: relevance to CLIVAR themes & JSC cross cutting topics and any cross-panel/working group links and interactions involved:

Plans for 2012 will emerge after the July 2011 VACS meeting. There will likely be a proposal to hold the next meeting with a training workshop in West Africa, possibly in Senegal or Ghana.

Options to join the 2012 VACS meeting to another event will be explored. A possibility is the ETCCDI training workshop that is planned for 2012 in Niamey, Niger.

7. Specific objectives and key agenda items
8. Anticipated outcomes (deliverables):
9. Format:
10. Science Organising Committee (if relevant):
11. Local Organising Committee (if relevant):
12. Proposed funding sources and anticipated funding requested from WCRP:

WCRP – US\$15K - 25K, depending on whether a training workshop is organized.