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### **Building Climate Resilient Society in the Sahel: The RAINWATCH Experience** Rosalind CORNFORTH<sup>1</sup>, Aondover TARHULE<sup>2</sup>, Galine YANON<sup>3</sup>, Kofi ASARE<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1,3</sup> The Walker Institute, University of Reading, Berkshire, UK

<sup>2</sup> Department of Geography and Environmental Sustainability, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma, US

<sup>4</sup> Ghana Space Science and Technology Institute, Legon-Accra, Ghana

#### **Abstract:**

The Sahel-Soudano zone that spans North Africa from Senegal to Ethiopia has experienced pronounced climatic variability (and conflicts) for millennia. Ironically (tragically, even), people within the Sahel have less access to, and therefore use less, instrumental rainfall information for planning and management than almost anywhere else in the world. Recognizing these constraints, RAINWATCH demonstrates the value of near real-time rainfall monitoring and improved communication. At core, RAINWATCH affords a common platform that permits a regional visualization of seasonal rainfall dynamics. The platform provides all users a common format, common feel and common visuals, regardless of the country information they choose to interrogate.

Whilst many of the National Hydrological and Meteorological agencies are making impressive efforts to produce tailored climate forecasts for their stakeholders, most appear to be country-specific. We are working in partnership with these agencies across the Sahel and supporting the regional climate centers such as ACMAD and AGHYMET.

The RAINWATCH Alliance has had to overcome several challenges, including data policies of the participating countries. It also has raised important questions about how to better integrate climate science-policy to develop locally relevant adaptive capacity. An important outcome is the co-production of understanding and the promotion of a more participatory decision-making process.

This paper discusses the RAINWATCH experience and ongoing efforts. There is a keen desire on the part of African NHMSs for regional alliances and cooperation. The lessons learned further reinforce the necessity for climate information knowledge co-production and dissemination to assure content relevance and accuracy for intended purposes. Within this framework, timely access to user-relevant climate information, access to relevant and reliable forecasts, and the ability of stakeholders to act on that information through effective strategic partnerships will prove the difference between coping proactively with emerging climate challenges and perpetuating the cycle of climate triggers and crisis.