



DEVELOPING RADIO PARTNERS

Focus: Policy

Climate change is now being recognised as a threat to human life. Many programmes have been launched to mitigate the effects of climate change.

One of the major players in the climate change fight is the government. The government through the Ministry of Lands, Natural Resources and Environmental Protection is working on the policies to make sure that climate change is enshrined into the national policies. This move involves consultations with other players such as NGOs.

When climate change becomes a priority through national policies, the issue can be adequately addressed. The government has shown commitment in the fight against climate change through the setting up of an Inter-Ministerial Secretariat on climate change.

This will be the coordinating body of all climate change activities in the country.

The Weekly Information Resource Bulletin

The goals of the Weekly Bulletin are:

- Bring listeners in the project area the latest information on natural resources, the environment and agriculture
- Focus on solutions, what works and what people can do
- Encourage listeners to share both their questions and solutions (African solutions for African problems)
- Raise awareness of issues that need to be discussed to affect public policy.
- Bring the latest solutions and practices that have relevance to this region from around the world
- Identify and link other NGOs working in the region share the project interests and goals
- Give the participating journalists guidance and tips on their reporting on these issues

The Problem: Deforestation.

There are an increasing number of trees being cut down in Zambia. One of the trees of choice is the Mukula tree -- valued highly on the international market. Most of the trees that have been cut down are to be exported to markets in Asia. The Mukula tree is mostly used in the production of furniture.

About 300,000 to 400,000 hectares of forest has been cut down in Zambia, leaving the land bare, contributing to the warming of the land surface. This, in turn, causes changes to the weather patterns -- and thus affecting the production of food crops.

One of the main reasons for the massive deforestation in Zambia has been due to the limited sensitisation in the communities. Many of the communities still the

lack the knowledge of what the long term dangers are for deforestation.

Another reason for deforestation is that huge tracts of land have been turned over to corporations. For instance, the huge mining companies, such as Lumwana mine in Solwezi, has been given huge pieces of land -- which have now been left bare.

Still another problem causing deforestation is the burning of charcoal. Most of families still depend on charcoal for most of their household use. Even people who have access to electricity often use charcoal due to hikes in electricity tariffs -- making it too expensive to cook using electric power.

Activities for Journalists

The government has, through the police service, been arresting people that are illegally cutting down trees. The Ministry of Lands, Natural Resources and Environmental Protection (MLNREP) working together with the police have arrested most of the illegal timber traders.

The issuing of certificates is one of the ways that the government is trying to limit illegal cutting. There have also been revisions to the Forestry Act and Timber Regulation to bring it up to date and help limit illegal cutting of trees. For instance, the Forestry Act was enacted in 1974, and some of its provisions didn't protect forests. Therefore, there have been revisions to make it conform to current conditions in an effort to help the government deal with deforestation more effectively.

Many of the people cutting down trees have sophisticated ways of moving illegally cut timber. Most of timber is transported in the night as there are reduced police patrols. The government announced that it will increase patrols in areas that have high deforestation levels -- such as Rufunsa. This is just one way the government is trying to mitigate the problem.

Initiatives such as the United Nations program, REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation), have also helped communities reduce problems with deforestation and their dependence on charcoal. For instance, people in the Southern Province of Zambia are now using cow dung. Cow dung is dried and can be used for cooking. One of the reasons that can be attributed for its success is that most people own cattle, but in areas that do not have cattle, coal is being used. It can be expensive to rely on

coal – and, at times, it is not readily available.

There is also training being conducted in some communities in help people find alternative livelihood to charcoal production -- such as bee keeping.

Some of the charcoal producers are eager to find an alternative source of income and most recognize the practice as destructive, but they lack the technical know-how of harvesting honey from the forests.

To reverse the alarming deforestation levels in Zambia, there is a need to mobilize and train communities in alternative livelihood skills – such as honey production.

The use of solar energy also could be developed – it can be used for lighting purposes, especially by low-income communities.

Are the government policies to reduce deforestation working? If not, why? What more can be done?

What is being done on a local level to reduce dependence on charcoal? Is anyone making briquettes in your community? Are energy-efficient stoves available at affordable prices?

You might host a program on alternatives to charcoal.

Do you know anyone who has switched from charcoal production to an alternative livelihood?

Useful Link

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