



DEVELOPING RADIO PARTNERS

Focus: Climate hazards

Droughts, floods, extreme heat and a shortening of the rainy season have been identified as the most common climatic hazards that adversely affect local livelihoods.

The impacts are especially critical in those communities with limited adaptive capacities to respond to climate change. Climate change vulnerability assessment undertaken by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature or IUCN revealed that communities have experienced an increase in the number of droughts, rain intensity, and extreme heat conditions over the past decades (IUCN, 2007).

Communities have adapted to these climate changes in various ways and are using traditional knowledge; however, the adaptation measures are weak.

The Weekly for Zambia 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: Poor adaptation to climate change

Most small-scale farmers have felt the effects of climate change. In Zambia, where we depend on rain-fed agriculture to support our livelihoods – there are frequent droughts, floods and high temperatures.

Common practices to adapt to climate changes depend heavily on forest products. It is this increased dependence on forest products that has contributed to forest degradation.

Charcoal production for income and overharvesting of forests have a negative impact on the environment. Zambia is now rated as one of the top ten countries losing its forests due to unsustainable use.

The government relief programmes do not provide adequate levels of food to meet the basic nutritional requirement and people cope by mainly eating forest products.

Still another problem is the over-harvesting of fish using unsustainable methods. This has continued to increase. This can lead to certain fish species becoming extinct – and ultimately threatens the livelihoods of people who depend on fishing to support themselves.

Climate smart agriculture needs to be promoted. It is now predicated that by 2020 there will a further reduction of food production due to climate change affecting mostly the rural poor.

Solutions: Activities for Journalists

Zambia mainly experiences droughts and flooding leading to crop failure or loss of properties.

Discuss with listeners various coping mechanisms to climate change.

Ask listeners in flood prone areas what construction methods they use? Traditionally mud houses are common, but very vulnerable to flooding.

Ask listeners if they feel like they are prepared for climate hazards – such as droughts and flooding.

The government has formed disaster management committees in disaster-prone areas.

Ask listeners how much they know about these committees and what activities they are involved in to prepare for possible disasters in their areas.

During food shortages people often turn to forests for food, but forest products are often over-harvested – leading to the degradation of the forests.

For instance, in areas where caterpillars are harvested, some people cut down the whole tree – instead of just harvesting the caterpillars.

Ask listeners how much they value forest as alternative food sources during hunger periods and what methods of harvesting are sustainable.

Interview a forestry expert about methods of harvesting that are sustainable – and practical.

Good community forest management leads to sustainability – and important for climate change mitigation.

Zambia has now a new Forest Act of 2015 that provides for communities to participate in management and sustainable use of forest resources.

Ask listeners how much they know about the new forest act.

Engage the local forest officers and discuss the act and its provisions for communities to participate in sustainable management and use.

Charcoal production is a very good source of income, but it destroys the forests. Ask listeners if they know of improved methods of producing charcoal. Ask forest officers for guidance.

As the climate continues to change, there will be greater dependence on forests as an alternative to farm-based livelihoods. It must be managed in order to survive and thrive.

Useful Links

Information about farming and the environment: Meteorology Department, Zambia Ranet project liaison person Reidner Mumbi, Email: rfemumba@yahoo.co.uk

Good source of information: Vincent Ziba, FAO Zambia, Zambia; Email: vinceziba@yahoo.com. Phone: 0966-246-924

Mwape Sichilongo, WWF Conservation Manager. Email: mwapesichilongo@wwfzam.org. Phone: +260 966442540

Conservation Farming Unity, Mr Sinya Mbale , Phone:+260 965 238 008