



DEVELOPING RADIO PARTNERS

Focus: Poor Rainfall Distribution

Many socio-economic activities in Zambia depend on climate and specifically on rainfall.

The three main economic sectors are mining, agriculture and tourism.

Rainfall affects the productivity of all of these sectors.

Poor rainfall in the 2014/2015 season affected the level of water in Kariba dam leading to poor electric generation leading to the closure of mines and thousands of job losses.

If we have a drought as a result of poor rainfall, crop production is affected and growth of pastures for both domestic livestock and wildlife is affected.

This can lead to mass migration of humans and wildlife in search of limited water and food resources. This can lead to conflicts between humans and wildlife and can affect the tourism industry of this country.

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 Distribution of Rain

Zambia's current rainy season has been characterised by a late start in some parts of the country -- especially the Southern and Western provinces. During the holiday period from Christmas to New Year's Eve some parts of the country received varying amounts of rain. Some parts of Lusaka Province received rain only around Christmas – while there was no rain up until the first week of January 2016 in Lungwa District and Kasisi area Chongwe.

This dry spell has followed a good germination and comes when most crops require more water for growth. If the

situation continues for a long time, crop production will be affected in some parts experiencing this dry spell.

Rainfall distribution is characterised by rainfall and dry spells within a season, sometimes referred to as rain days in a season.

Some areas like Mwinilunga district of Northwestern province have received excessive rainfall.

This can lead to flooding or leaching of the soils causing damage and poor crop performance respectively. These are signs of the predicted El Nino effect.

Solutions: Activities for Journalists

Understanding the climatic condition of our areas is very important. This assists us in planning and mitigating the negative impacts of weather.

Weather information, like we have previously mentioned in our bulletins, is very important for everyone -- starting with the local communities that depend on rain-fed agricultural activities.

Local community radio stations need to take interest in understanding the different climatic characteristics and means of measurement to inform their listeners.

The poor distribution of rain can lead to droughts or floods. These impacts sometimes are too much for the local communities to cope and require government or international community support.

Community radio stations are necessary in order to gather information of affected areas and inform the communities and policy makers to prepare for the consequences.

Droughts and flooding can also be an opportunity to some communities that have better weather – as they can get better prices for their crops – if there are shortages elsewhere.

The information on poor distribution of rain is important for immediate planning and coordination within communities.

In case of food shortages in some areas how will this affect food distribution and marketing?

Ask listeners how many participate in disaster management committees and how do they work with the local radio stations to share their activities or gather information for planning?

Ask listeners how the distribution of rainfall has been in their areas compared to a season they call normal.

If the situation of poor rainfall distribution

continues, ask listeners what they can do to avoid suffering the consequences of crop failure?

For instance, small-scale farmers are encouraged to diversify crop production to include drought and flood resistant varieties.

Drought resistant crops include early maturing maize, cassava, sweet potatoes, beans, millet and Sorghum varieties.

Flood resistant crops include cassava varieties and some long maturing maize varieties suitable for vulnerable regions.

Flood prone areas are encouraged to plant on ridges to avoid the rotting of crops.

If the dry spells continue, planting crops near wetlands is also encouraged for food security and income generation.

Wetland management by the community is also encouraged to manage water catchment areas.

Disaster management committees are also important in monitoring and coordinating activities in the community during weather emergencies.

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.
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