



DEVELOPING RADIO PARTNERS

## Focus: Energy and Development

Energy is one of the basic requirements to support livelihoods. Zambia's energy sources include electricity, petroleum, coal, biomass, and renewable energy.

Only 20% of the rural population has access to electricity generated through hydropower. This means 80% of the population struggles with different sources of energy -- mainly wood fuel and charcoal for basic energy needs.

When available, energy often adds value to farm products produced in rural areas, but there is often a cost.

Many forms of energy available to rural populations pollute the environment and also affect human health.

Charcoal, for one, contributes to deforestation and the pollution it generates -- contributes to global warming.

# 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: Lack of Off-the-Grid Efficient Energy

Inequality of access to modern energy services significantly hinders development potential for many people. Communities without adequate energy services that support production and value-added processing remain locked in a subsistence economy.

Much of the labor demand for domestic and farm activities falls to women. A lack of access to clean, reliable and local energy sources also creates health risks and increases vulnerability to external shocks, whether natural or economic. This often leads to price hikes and fuel shortages. Those with lower incomes pay significantly more for energy services than

the better off.

For many people living in remote communities, the cost of extending electricity grids is too high and is unlikely to happen. Nonetheless, more equitable and affordable access to modern energy is possible. These energy sources are often enough for such things as lighting, refrigeration, the use of labor saving appliances and agricultural processing. Best yet, these energy sources are often clean.

Off the grid electricity can improve job opportunities and increase farm productivity through better irrigation practices.

## Solutions: Activities for Journalists

The Rural Electricity Authority of Zambia recently received an award from an Italian firm for helping a local community gain access to basic lighting electricity in Zambia.

Do your listeners know about REA of Zambia? Do they know that REA has energy packages suitable for local communities that include mini-hydropower stations and solar mini-grid systems?

Off-the-main-grid electricity has several advantages for local communities. They include:

- Increase resilience in the face of economic, climate and natural shocks through the availability of a local, more reliable and predictably-priced energy supply.
- Improved family health, especially for children by displacing polluting fuels such as kerosene.
- Increased study hours for students and better education.
- Improved household security through better lighting at night.
- Saving money by displacing existing more costly fuels.
- Greater leisure opportunities and access to TV and radio for news and information.

Community initiatives such as the forming of clubs that raise funds to co-support government and co-fund a solar grid has been encouraged by the REA.

Ask listeners if they'd be interested in forming a club and approaching REA offices about off-the-grid electricity in their areas.

Charcoal and other forms of wood fuel is the most used form of energy in Zambia. However, the production of wood and

charcoal fuel is very unsustainable to the environment.

Renewable energy sources can now power not just lighting, but other livelihood-supporting energy services -- such as agricultural processing, even for remote off-grid communities.

This has the potential to significantly empower poor communities.

Communities have access to constituent development funds. These funds have been used for construction works – such as new schools and clinics.

The problem of power cuts and the continuing call for reducing deforestation to reduce the effects of climate change demands a shift in doing things.

One solution is for communities to look at working with the REA of Zambia on renewable, clean fuels.

### Useful Links

Information about farming and the environment:  
Mr Justine Mukosa- Head of Communications  
REA, [mukosa.justin@rea.org.zm](mailto:mukosa.justin@rea.org.zm)

Good source of information: Vincent Ziba, FAO  
Zambia, Zambia; Email: [vinceziba@yahoo.com](mailto:vinceziba@yahoo.com).  
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