



DEVELOPING RADIO PARTNERS

Focus:**Research & Traditional Knowledge**

Research is an important element in understanding what causes a particular problem and finding possible solutions to the problem.

One of the areas that needs more attention is research on issues of climate change in Zambia and how it is affecting our communities. Extensive research needs to be done so that broad-based solutions are considered – including traditional knowledge.

Traditional knowledge includes the use of natural occurrences to determine or predict the future.

For instance, the growth of a certain wild fruit called ‘masuku’ suggests there will be drought and therefore the gods have sent the fruit to protect the people from hunger. However, the real reason the fruit thrives in drought conditions is because it is drought-resistant.

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: Research Challenges on Climate Change

Research institutions in Zambia such as The University of Zambia and Copperbelt University have carried out limited research on climate change. These two institutions are supposed to be the centres of research on many issues including climate change.

Due to inadequate government funding these institutions are able to do only limited research in certain areas of the country.

In addition to inadequate funding, there is also the issue of capacity. People vested in climate change knowledge are few and they cannot reach out to all parts of the country. Initiatives to train people in local communities have been initiated, but results have yet to be felt. One such event was the training of climate change ambassadors by the United Nations. This involves the training of

young people on climate change issues such as causes and solutions.

Another challenge facing climate change research is that communities don’t understand what climate change is. Dr Choolwe Beyani, who looked at how climate change is affecting the communities of Luangwa and Mongu, notes that while people do understand that weather is changing, they don’t understand the cause.

Dr Beyani points to problems he faced during his research project in Mongu and Luangwa. He says communities have solutions to the effects of climate change, but they feel they are not consulted on most of the climate change projects that happen in their communities. For instance, both communities are to receive funds for a climate change adaptation project, but residents haven’t been involved in the solution process – including incorporating their traditional knowledge into the projects.

Activities for Journalists

In addressing research challenges on climate change in Zambia there is need to increase funding for climate change projects. One such initiative to be considered is the creation of an interim Ministerial Secretariat on Climate Change under the Ministry Of Finance to coordinate all climate change activities in the country. There is currently an interim ministerial secretariat on climate change which will become national climate change secretariat with full-fledged staff that would operate independently.

In addition, communities need to be continuously sensitised on climate change so that they are able to be practical in mitigating its impact. The traditional knowledge of the people needs to be documented alongside the scientific knowledge. This will help in that some of the solutions will be easily understood by the people. Communities have kept seeds that they have grown for long periods of time. For instance, there is a maize seed called ‘gangata’ which grows even when there is little rainfall as compared to the hybrid seeds on the market – that struggle in drought-like conditions.

One thing that needs to be done is to create seed banks – where seeds can be stored and later planted alongside hybrid seeds. The ‘traditional maize seeds’ are not usually sold on the market because they do not have weight as compared to hybrid seed.

This is another opportunity to promote food security in that farmers can grow as much maize as they want using both the traditional maize and hybrid seeds. Later, they can sell the hybrid maize and keep the traditional maize seed for the next planting.

Traditional maize seed has several other advantages. It is highly resistant to pests and it does not need chemical fertilisers. All the farmer needs to do is plant the seed and then weed it, regularly.

Agriculture policy makers need to ensure these traditional seeds are preserved – and work toward producing a similar type of seeds with similar traits that can be sold on the market.

There is also the need to introduce climate change education at all levels – starting with primary school and continuing through university. This will lead to a much greater understanding of the problem and will lead to more solutions.

As a radio station conduct an informal survey to find out which schools in your community have climate change related activities – such as green clubs.

Interview students about how they have been influenced by these clubs.

Check with your local extension office and find a farmer who uses traditional maize seeds like “gangata.” Is the farmer happy with his/her crop yield? Does the farmer use traditional and hybrid seeds? What has been their experience with these seeds?

Invite an extension agent on your program to discuss various drought-resistant crops and how they can help reduce food shortages during times of drought.

Talk to students about climate change. How knowledgeable are they about the impact climate change is having on their own community? Start a program featuring young people talking about climate change.

Useful Link

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