



DEVELOPING RADIO PARTNERS

Focus: shortage in water supply.

Water is an important resource because it's critical in most of the activities that people do which include cooking, washing, cooling the body by drinking it etc.

However, this resource is being threatened because of our damage to the environment -- through a variety of means including emission of toxic waste and deforestation.

The toxic waste that is being poured into the rivers from industries, such as mines, has made the water undrinkable -- depriving us of clean and safe water.

When water is contaminated it causes all sorts of health complications -- some of which can lead to death.

In trying to prevent this toxic water from reaching the communities -- companies such as the Lusaka Water and Sewerage Company (LWSC) may not pump this water so that the communities do not get sick, it is also costly for the company to treat water that has huge amounts of toxins in it.

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 and Water Supply

Deforestation is the leading cause of most of the rivers drying up. In the case of the southern province the region has become almost a desert. This can be attributed to the past activities of indiscriminate tree-cutting. The province used to be known as the 'food basket' of the nation because people grew crops on large tracts of land that supplied the whole country.

However, in growing crops there was mass deforestation. The effects of this deforestation can be felt through the short rainfall season experienced in the province and also the hotness of the province.

The Magoye River which is a major source of water in the southern province has dried up. If you talk to people who have lived in Magoye for a long time they say the river never used to dry up.

One of the elders, Mr. Halubono who is 79 years old, said there used to be plenty of trees and plenty of rainfall -- and he says the rainy season was longer in the old days. This is the main reason that the communities had water throughout the year. Today, the story is different because there are no trees and the temperature is too high.

Deforestation brings about high temperatures that cause a lot of evaporation of water when huge tracts of land are left bare.

Trees help in absorbing the heat from the sun making the land surface cooler -- thus conserving water.

Trees that are near water bodies such as rivers help in preventing water evaporation and also it helps in holding sand and soil that is near the lake that would otherwise make the river die.

Activities for Journalists

Mr. Frank Dube a resident of Zingalume in Lusaka who works at a community water pump has expressed his concerns at the erratic water shortages he's been experiencing from the Lusaka Water and Sewerage Company. He thinks that the Kafue River, which supplies most of Lusaka with water, is slowly drying up and cannot accommodate the growing population. He further acknowledges that the reduction of water levels in the river is a result of environmental factors that have included cutting of trees along the river and an increasing population.

If cutting down of trees continues around water bodies such rivers and dams the water problems will persist. With the growing population and growing settlements it is very important that tree planting initiatives be intensified. If deforestation continues, many of these water bodies will become dry in the years to come.

When trees are cut near water, sediment and silt flow into the waterways. Silt causes fine mineral particles to show up in the water. This forces water utility companies to spent extra financial resources on making sure that the drinking water is clean and safe. This can lead to higher water bills.

If we stop deforestation and plant more trees across large tracts of land it will help to replenish water supplies. When large areas of land are replenished with trees and other plants more people have access to clean drinking water.

It is important that communities are educated on the need to plant trees and also to promote practices that help conserve trees so that enough water is conserved

for future generations.

With the coming of a water authority management board, it will be very important for it to be effective in executing its mandate. An important function of the board is to regulate the construction of buildings and the regulation of activities near bodies of water. Anyone that intends to do any activity that poses a threat to the water supply must write to the board – which will then approve or disapprove the activity.

Have a panel discussion with community members and discuss why they think their community is experiencing irregular water supplies. Discuss how deforestation is contributing to this water shortage.

Interview a water official and discuss with them why there are water shortages.

Interview listeners and find out how they are affected by water shortages? Do they have to carry water long distances when there are shortages?

What can the community do to help reduce water shortages?

Work with local NGOs and forestry officials and organized a tree planting in your community.

Useful Link

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