



DEVELOPING RADIO PARTNERS

Renewable Energy.

Zambia's energy sources include; electricity, petroleum, coal, biomass, and renewable energy.

The demand for the most important energy source in the country - electricity has been growing at an average of about three percent a year mainly due to the increased economic activity in the country especially in the agriculture, manufacturing and mining sectors.

Most of the electricity is generated from the major hydro-electric power stations which include Kafue Gorge, Kariba and Victoria Falls power stations.

With the change in the weather patterns there is less water flowing in most of the rivers where these power plants are located.

As a result and in order to ensure there will be a stable supply of electricity in the future, there is a strong need to have alternative clean energy.

There is enormous potential for investment opportunities in the energy sector to meet the country's demand for the various forms of energy – and those investment opportunities include renewable energy.

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

Solar Energy

Solar energy is one type of power that is in abundance. This energy is mainly collected from the sun.

The growing demand for electricity has stressed the existing infrastructure thereby calling for its expansion. Yet the more these hydro-electric dams are expanded, the more pressure that is exerted on the rivers as there is a growing need to construct more dams.

The diversion of water from the main river source into constructed dams brings with it the challenge of drying up of small streams that at times are the main source of livelihood for many communities.

For instance when there is drying up of the small rivers activities such as: fishing and

irrigation are affected. Also the people that depend on these streams for household use are affected.

Solar energy is one of the best alternatives to hydroelectricity. Zambia has on average somewhere between 2000-3000 hours of sunshine per year. However, setting up a solar energy system is costly.

Still, the benefits will pay off in the long-term.

Solar energy occurs in the natural setting; sun energy is tapped and stored; stored energy can be used in the night for cooking and lighting.

Communities need to be educated on the benefits of using solar energy. Perhaps, too, the government and others should subsidize these solar systems so that communities can afford them.

Activities for Journalists

With a growing awareness of the benefits of using solar power many communities are turning to solar energy. This is mostly visible in the rural communities – where most are not connected to the national electricity grid.

Some of the initiatives that are coming into the country through mostly non-governmental organisations are the subsidizing of solar equipment – making it affordable to communities.

The government through the main electricity company (ZESCO) is piloting a solar project that is aiming at using solar energy to provide street lights. This project though costly is proving to be successful. As part of this project the utility company hopes to eventually electrify houses.

In rural areas solar energy is playing a bigger role as clinics and schools are benefitting. Rural clinics are now able to refrigerate medicines and students are now even able to study during the night.

With the growth in the number of people building houses, solar energy should be promoted so as to reduce interruption in the electricity supply. Solar energy does not produce harmful gases that are released into the air -- rather it is a form of clean energy.

The other benefit of using solar energy is that it does displace people from their communities -- as was experienced during the construction of the Kariba Hydro Power Station.

While solar power has many benefits it also has its own challenges such as being

expensive to set up and also being dependent on the sun.

When there is limited sunlight especially in the rainy season for many days there is a likelihood of less power. It is different from hydroelectricity which doesn't require sunlight.

With the proposed creation of a coal-powered electric plant in Maamba in the southern part of the country the effects of global warming will be increased. Coal produces toxic gases which bring with it increased temperatures and disturbances in the rainfall patterns – something that is already being experienced in the country.

With the planet continuing to heat up and the deterioration of the environment, one alternative is for government and various stakeholders to promote solar energy. Yes, it is expensive, but it is also environmental friendly.

What are the other alternatives that can be promoted in communities as clean energy that does not bring about environmental degradation? Is anyone using solar power in your community? Interview them!

Do you believe the government should do more to encourage solar power use? Should it provide subsidies to communities? Are there any NGOs in your community that promote solar power use?

Useful Links

Mr Crispin Kahongo. Zambia Electricity Supply Corporation (ZESCO). Senior Manager-Transmission South. Cell: 0966905484. clkahongo@zesco.co.zm

Geoffrey Kaila. Muhanya Solar Limited. Managing Director. Cell: 0955882152. muhanyasolar@zamnet.zm

Henry Kapata. ZESCO, Senior Public Relations Officer. Cell: 0967719515. henrykapata@yahoo.com