



DEVELOPING RADIO PARTNERS

Focus: Fire Management

Burning is widely used as an economical way to prepare land for farming activities as well as kill weeds and weed seeds. During the dry season, starting in June and July, burning activities are intensified in Zambia. People use fires for different reasons – such as gathering honey, hunting, to release nutrients for crops to grow fast, to increase crop yields and to clear land.

Fires can be essential to maintain certain ecosystem needs, but can also be bad for our environment and for biodiversity management.

Fire causes the loss of many human and animal lives. Therefore the management of fires is very important at household and community levels. A process of planning, preventing and fighting fires to protect crops, property, forest resources, ecosystem services and human health needs to be encouraged.

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

Problem: Uncontrolled Fire

Zambia is dominated by vast areas of fire-prone vegetation including woodland savannas and grasslands.

It is estimated that 25% of Zambia's land base burns annually.

Most fires in Zambia are caused by humans for traditional activities such as clearing indigenous vegetation for agriculture, improving pastures for grazing, burning crop residues, hunting, and stimulating the growth of non-timber forest products. Fire is used as a tool by the Zambian people throughout the dry season, but the effects can be significant late in the dry season when wood fuels are fully cured and fires can

quickly spread into adjacent villages or protected areas and can cause damage to human properties and wildlife.



The impact of fire on biodiversity is very significant, especially on small animals living in the soils and trees.

Birds and snakes suffer the consequences as seen in most communities where fire is used for hunting purposes.

Solutions: Activities for Journalists

Use your community radio station to help listeners understand the significance of fire management.

Dry season fires which are done during harvesting time may present a threat to food security and other household properties and cause loss of income, and yields.

Managing fires by planning can help in reducing the dangers and losses which might result from them or increase the benefits of fires.

Discuss with your community about how they view dry season fires?

Find out the main causes of fires in their communities and how do they control them so that the fires don't burn property and wildlife.

Are more farmers using fires for clearing agricultural land and/or to kill weeds?

Find out if they have suffered losses due to fire?

Effective fire burning is performed in order to reduce the risks and dangers to households and the general public. Simple techniques to share with the community are: determining the right time to burn – by looking at wind speed, ensure the humidity and temperature are low.

Wind direction and speed can be checked on site by throwing soils into the air or watching the movement of the leaves. Agricultural burning should occur before the dry season and before the surrounding landscape becomes dry and prone to fire.

BURNING TECHNIQUE

To avoid high risk or danger the following techniques can help:

The construction of a clean fire belt can help keep the fire from spreading beyond your boundaries.

Setting a fire in the direction of the wind can help control fires and keep them confined to a certain area.

Divide the area into sections for burning and encourage community participation. It is in everyone's interest to help since fires can affect the entire community.

Inform Zambia Wildlife Authority And Forest Department of intentions to burn and get professional advice.

Encourage the development of community-based fire management plans. An improved outreach to communities can ease the social and ecological effects of fire.

Useful Links

Information about farming and the environment: Makweti Sishekanu, National Farmers Union Zambia: +260-211-252-649 or +260-965-098-360. Email: makwetiskanu@yahoo.com

Good source of information: Vincent Ziba, National Coordinator, Community-based National Resource Management Forum, Zambia; Email: vinceziba@yahoo.com. Phone: 0966-246-924

Good source of information; Mwape Sichilongo, WWF Conservation Manager. Email: msichilongo@wwfzam.org. Phone: +260 966442540