



DEVELOPING RADIO PARTNERS

Focus: Extreme Weather

Weather is simply defined as the state of the atmosphere of a particular place and a particular time as regards heat, dryness, wind and rain.

Extreme weather includes unusual and severe weather often based on a location's recorded weather history. Recent weather events such as devastating droughts and floods have sparked popular interest in understanding the role of global warming in driving extreme weather.

While natural variability occurs, the current extreme weather events around the world are attributed largely to human activity.

These activities include rampant deforestation and forest degradation that we are seeing in most parts of Zambia.

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: More and More Severe Weather

Zambia is experiencing weather conditions that most people in rural and urban areas consider not normal.

The month of January on average received the highest amount of rainfall in most parts of Zambia. The average was 195 mm. However, parts of the Southern, Western and Lusaka areas received less than 40 mm of rain between mid-November and early January -- as reported by Mr Jacob Nkomoki, the Director of the Meteorology Department.

On Jan. 8, Lusaka and some southern areas were hit by a violent hailstorm that left a trail of destruction. It killed

five people in Lusaka the capital city, destroyed buildings and washed away already wilted crops in some areas.

The extreme weather conditions are projected to increase and hence more action is required by individuals and governments.

For instance, there needs to be more crop diversity. Yet most people still depend solely on maize.

In addition, people still build houses without proper architectural designs – with no regard for extreme weather events.

Solutions: Activities for Journalists

Ask listeners to share the extreme weather events they are experiencing in their areas?

What impact are these weather events having on their lives and how are they coping?

Zambian Minister of Agriculture Mr. Given Lubinda said the government had begun an assessment of the country's food situation to help it plan for anticipated shortages, this assessment is due to be completed by the end of this week -- Jan. 23, 2016.

Consult the Agriculture extension officers in your areas to give more details of this exercise and what indicators they are looking for?

Check with the public affairs office at the Ministry to find out the results of this assessment once it is complete. How does it relate to your community?

Planning for a possible poor crop harvest is very important. Some farmers are shifting agricultural practices to include small livestock that can easily be managed and traded during hunger periods.

The rain season is still on -- there is a need to promote water harvesting techniques.

Small scale farmers in rural and peri-urban areas can start engaging local government representatives for water harvesting investment using constituency development funds. Ask your extension officer about these funds.

Water harvesting methods that are common include dams and water tanks in rural areas. They can be used to provide water for livestock or for garden production.

Ask listeners if they have attended any training in water harvesting methods. Engage the Ministry of Agriculture Department of Technical Services for advice.

The extreme weather also calls for change in the choice of planting material. Farmers need to choose plants that do not need a lot of moisture for maturity.

Loss of life was recorded in Lusaka recently due to a fence collapsing from heavy rains.

Ask listeners how much they consider extreme weather events when constructing buildings. In flood-prone areas people are encouraged to construct houses on higher ground.

The Engineering Association of Zambia has called on all Zambians involved in construction to have their drawings approved. However, most people have begun constructing wall fences without this approval.

Extreme care must be considered as extreme weather events do have fatal consequences – as seen earlier this month. The occurrence of extreme weather conditions is expected to continue as a result of the changing climate. This calls for stringent rules and monitoring of construction activities by the local government.

Knowing and understanding the weather changes is key for everyone.

Listening to the radio for weather information can help the community plan and mitigate extreme weather events.

Does your station broadcast the weather several times a day? Is the weather information always up to date? Is it easy to understand so that you can share it in a meaningful way to listeners?

Useful Links

Information about farming and the environment: Meteorology Department, Zambia Ranet project liaison person Reidner Mumbi, Email: rfemumba@yahoo.co.uk

Good source of information: Vincent Ziba, FAO Zambia, Zambia; Email: vinceziba@yahoo.com. Phone: 0966-246-924

Mwape Sichilongo, WWF Conservation Manager. Email: mwapesichilongo@wwfzam.org. Phone: +260 966442540

Information environmental degradation write to Irene Lungu of ZEMA on iglungu@zema.org.zm