

The Weekly

Information Resource Bulletin

Climate change Focus

Climate change seriously affects water resources around the world. Changing water levels and temperatures will in turn affect food supply.

Malawi's population has grown from 6 million in 1966 to about 15 million in the last four decades. (*Malawi DHS*). With an annual growth rate of 2.8 percent, the National Statistical Office (NSO) projects the population could more than triple to 50 million by 2050.

This is worrying because there will be an increased pressure on water, land and other natural resources.

A large population takes a lot of water to keep everything going. We use water to make food, drink, manufacture products and a lot more other things.

In the face of warming temperatures caused by climate change on top of the strong and increased demand placed on supply by human needs, some of the world's largest lakes, rivers and seas are growing smaller with every season.

The goals of the Weekly Bulletin are:

- To discuss the link between increase population, climate change and drying up of water sources
- To promote discussion and dialogue between listeners and other community members about the water crisis in some community's
- To find possible solutions to the drying up of some water sources in the country.
- To start a discussion about whether laws and policies do enough to protect water resources

The Problem: Climate Change, Increased Population and Water Sources Drying Up

The relationship between water, agriculture and climate is very important. But this relationship is falling out of balance, putting at risk food, water and energy security.

Climate change is something we can no longer deny as its effects have become increasingly evident in the country and worldwide.

Climate change and a growing population are a threat to the water supply. Climate change brings warmer and drier weather, leading to the drying up of rivers and lakes. Increased population will also increase demand for water, resulting into contributing to the drying up of the rivers/lakes as well. The flow of water will decrease as population needs increase. When the rivers/lakes dry up, the ability of a community to feed itself is also affected.

For example, Climate change is

threatening many livelihoods around Malawi's Lake Chilwa.

In 2012 there were reports that Lake Chilwa could dry up completely in the next 2-3 years.

This is a cause for worry to a lot of Malawians since most people surrounding the lake use the water for rice farming and fish from the lake provides a source of food and income to many Malawians.

Lake Chilwa is driven by recurring changes in water levels which are mainly influenced by annual rainfall patterns. So when there is a change in rainfall patterns the water levels are affected.

Scientists say the changing rainfall patterns and changes in lake levels are influenced by accelerated environmental degradation taking place in the catchment area.

Lake Chilwa also dried up in 1995, but it filled up after the area received good rains afterwards.

Activities for Journalists

Use your radio station to help your community understand that climate change and increased population lead to the drying up of water resources such as lakes and rivers.

According to a report by the Population Action International combined effects of climate change and rapid population growth are increasing environmental degradation.

Malawi has already been experiencing climate change effects, including erratic rainfall, floods, droughts, dry spells, cold spells, strong winds, thunderstorms, landslides and hailstorms. These have resulted in crop failure, disruption of hydroelectric power generation, and water shortages.

According to the Lake Chilwa Basin Climate Change Adaptation Program (LCBCCAP), which seeks to secure the livelihoods of 1.5 million people in the Lake Chilwa Basin; people's lives around the lake have been threatened by the lowering of water levels. The lake has almost dried up completely. While many of the people who were fishing in the area have moved to other areas where they can fish or secure other livelihoods.

Drying up of lakes has disastrous effects on irrigation, fishing and biodiversity. You can talk of some of the reasons that may lead to the drying up of Lake Chilwa. Some of the examples may include:

Tree cutting

The LCBCCAP report states that people in the catchment area have been cutting down trees, and the trees are sold to fishermen who use the wood to dry their fish and build boats. Malawi has among the highest deforestation rates in the world because of agricultural expansion, growth of human settlements, dependence on wood for cooking, reliance on burnt bricks for construction, and low levels of reforestation.

You can come up with more reasons.

Have a vox pop with some community members and ask them about some of the water problems they are facing in their community.

Ask environmentalists if current policies do enough to protect water resources.

Why are laws and policies weak?

Ask people if they would consider using a cook stove that requires less fuel – and thus less trees.

Ask people from your community what they can do to curb water challenges that they are facing. Also introduce the topic of Lake Chilwa to them and them to discuss the possible ways Malawians could follow to avoid the drying up of Lake Chilwa and other lakes and rivers.

Useful Contacts

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- <http://www.lakechilwaproject.mw/admin/modules/reports/archive/If%20Lake%20Chilwa%20Dries%20up.pdf>
- Malawi Demographic Health survey 2010

