



DEVELOPING RADIO PARTNERS

Focus: Water supply

Usually, Zambia has more than adequate water resources; however, during the dry season water resources may be scarce, especially in the southern part of the country. The annual rainfall averages between 1400 mm in the north and gradually declines to 700 mm in the south. There are four main river basins that make up the main water sources: the Zambezi, Chambesi, Luangwa and Kafue rivers. About 60% of the population of Zambia have access to an improved water source (UNCEF).

The water supply is managed by water utility companies established in all ten provinces of this country and supplemented by a local government authority.

They are guided by the Department of Water Affairs.

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: Poor Supply of Clean Water

Zambia experienced poor rainfall in the 2011 and 2012 season. This has been attributed to climate change – and has led to low dam levels. One of the results: electricity shortages.

Electric shortages have meant interruptions in the distribution of water for domestic and sanitation purposes.

Lusaka in particular has down-scaled water supplies by more than 50% for homes.

This situation has significant negative social impacts, in particular on girls and women who are often in charge of collecting water for their villages and homes – sometimes they must walk extremely long distances to find suitable drinking water.

After carrying water, girls are

often too tired to come back home and concentrate on reading and math and other school subjects.

This water situation is also posing a danger in that often times the water they have to carry long distances is not clean.

The Ministry of Health has sounded alarms about the dangers of drinking contaminated water, but if there is nothing else to drink – many people will drink it.

Much of Zambia's drinking water infrastructure was built between independence in 1964 and the mid-1970s. There is a need to update this infrastructure – and reduce the chances of people drinking water that can make them sick.

Solutions: Activities for Journalists

Ask listeners where they get their drinking water. In most cases people use taps or wells.

Have there been a lot of water interruptions in your community? What are the main causes? Dried up wells? No water in the taps?

In rural areas how far do people have to go to fetch clean water?

The Zambian Government has been implementing the Water, Sanitation, and Health Education project (WASHE) in rural areas in collaboration with local governments to help affected communities cope with poor water and sanitation situations.

Ask listeners if they are aware of the WASHE initiative in their area.

Consult the district council authorities who are managers of WASHE programmes across the country to share activities going on in your respective areas.

There is a need for government investment in underground water management and protection of water recharge areas.

Increased population growth has a direct impact on water demands and also sanitation facilities. The government needs to increase funding in the sector and also support community initiatives for protection and management of fresh water resources.

This problem is not likely to go away. Increased average temperatures due to climate change will have greater impact on water bodies like Lake Kariba. Increased evaporation will mean continued pressure on the Kariba and Kafue systems to provide

water needed for hydro-power generation even if the water levels can increase in these water bodies for power generation.

Ask listeners near the main water bodies like Kafue River, Kariba Dam and others how the water levels have been changing over the last 10 years.

Has there been an increase in water-borne diseases in your community lately? If so, what do health officials say were the causes? Has the situation been remedied?

Underground water contamination is a big threat to clean water supplies – and the water needs to be checked regularly.

Advise communities to frequently have their water tested. Encourage communities to use boiled water or treat it with chlorine as recommended by Ministry of health.

WASHE programmes form local councils that have a lot of community awareness activities for safe and clean water and good sanitation practices.

Useful Links

Information about farming and the environment: Chief Environment officer, Emphrain Shitima, email emshitima40@gmail.com

Water partnership programme, contact Mrs Monicav Chundama on 0977688621

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