



DEVELOPING RADIO PARTNERS

Focus: Climate Change and Water

Water plays a vital role in our day-to-day lives. It is needed for cooking, drinking and even for the generation of hydroelectricity.

Climate change is affecting the levels of water. There is reduced rainfall and that means less water.

This year Lusaka has been hit with numerous complaints about the erratic water supply. Its response to customers: water levels are low and water supplies will return to normal when the rains come to increase the water table.

People in Mandevu compound, for instance, have had to move to the nearby area of Chaisa compound to draw water and people are having to pay more for water -- as much as K1 per 10 litres plastic container.

Lack of water has created a challenge for those with flushing toilets. Many households now use flushable toilets that need a constant supply of water. Unable to flush their toilets, people are likely to experience water-borne diseases.

This week's bulletin looks at sanitation.

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

The Problem: Poor Sanitation Due to Lack of Water

The lack of water that is being experienced in most parts of Lusaka has led to unhealthy living conditions. For one thing, people are not able to use their flushable toilets and are having to defecate outdoors.

This creates a potential health hazard -- particularly for children -- who play outdoors.

Due to the erratic water supply, many people are forced to dig pit latrines. Often times, they are dug near wells.

This is very unhealthy as the waste from the pit toilet may seep into the well water -- creating a potentially deadly situation.

Diseases such as cholera and dysentery are rampant in most of the urban area as people cannot get clean water.

The flushable toilets are not connected to the main sewerage pipe; instead they flow into septic tanks. When these tanks fill up, they start overflowing and the waste water flows over the ground and contaminate the area. It creates a breeding ground for disease and even mosquitoes -- that carry malaria.

The other problem that has arisen with the digging of septic tanks is that space is limited and the houses are just too close to each other. This creates another unhealthy situation in that most septic tanks are near a borehole making the water unsafe to drink.

Still another problem -- people can't wash their hands and this promotes water-borne diseases such as diarrhea.

Activities for Journalists

It has been found that the use of animal waste in the growing of vegetables is much cheaper than using fertilizers. Most of the farmers in the outskirts of Lusaka use animal dung to grow their vegetables. The vegetables that are grown in these conditions are often healthier. In rural areas, some farmers recycle urine, by applying it directly to the land.

Since urine is chemically richer than fertilizer, farmers believe that vegetables grown with urine are tastier and give a higher yield.

Vegetables grown in these conditions should be washed extensively with clean water to avoid the spread of disease.

It is often hard to find clean water – particularly if boreholes are contaminated.

Ways to make water safe to drink:

Chlorinated water is safe to drink and does not have germs that may cause waterborne diseases such as cholera and dysentery. Another way to make water safe to drink is to boil it.

The Lusaka water sewage company needs to promote services such as providing sewage services to more people. The septic tanks that most people are digging, especially in the urban areas, are often not sanitary.

Communities should be encouraged to wash their hands after using the toilet so as to avoid diseases. Washing of hands with soap prevents the spread of disease.

There is also a need to promote portable toilets. These types of toilets can be cleaned and moved regularly.

There is also a need to promote the generation of power with the sewage materials. This could be a good alternative to hydroelectric power – and solves the problem of waste polluting the community.

Interview an officer from the local council to find out what plans are in place concerning sanitation in the communities they cover?

Have another interview with an environmental officer in your area to talk about some of the heat-related illnesses that are common.

Talk to a doctor or nurse from your area about proper hygiene and how to avoid water-borne diseases.

Interview some farmers from your community and ask them if they use sewage waste to grow their vegetables. If they do, what has been their experience?

Talk to a local agricultural extension worker to find out the advantages of using treated sewage waste as compared to fertilizer.

Useful Link

Mr Emmanuel Mutamba, Coordinator, Green Living Movement. 0977891826