



DEVELOPING RADIO PARTNERS

Focus: Partnerships

Climate change is an issue that cannot be dealt with only by the government and nongovernmental organisations (NGOs). The issue also requires the participation of ordinary citizens.

One such area that needs strong partnerships is the planting of trees. People need to be brought on board in planting trees and understand why tree planting is important to them and their community.

Around 3500 square miles of forest ecosystem are lost each year in Zambia to industry, timbering, small scale farming, and charcoal production (<http://www.loe.org>). In fact, Zambia is ranked as one of the countries with the highest rates of deforestation in the world (Henry et.al. 2011)

In order to reduce the high levels of deforestation, communities must be involved. An organization called the Centre for Livelihood and Watershed Management (CLEWM) has been working with the communities of the central province to help them understand the need to having trees and it's also been trying to get communities involved in planting trees.

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: Community participation

Some climate change projects do not have the intended impact because the communities are left out in the planning process. This causes the communities not to understand their role in the project and hence don't feel it is part of their community.

For instance, views that were collected from the residents of Kabwe indicate that they were not involved in a tree planting project and hence were just merely watching from the sidelines. The people running the project explained the benefits in English and there was no translation, so the community felt it was only for the 'educated' to understand.

The language barrier has also greatly contributed to communities not understanding the role they should play in other projects and

become observers rather than participants. In fact, many times the brochures distributed during a project are not even translated into the local language – further widening the gap between project implementers and the local community.

For example, during the pilot program on climate resilience (PPCR) sensitization in Senanga many of the people that were interviewed expressed ignorance about the project and this was supposed to be a community-driven project.

In many cases, project implementation concentrates on ly on community leaders, such as headmen, with the view that they will spread the news, but in many instances they do not.

There is also need to use as many communications mediums as possible to reach people to let them know what projects are happening in the communities and what role they can play.

Activities for Journalists

Use your radio station to help your community understand how they can care for their newly-planted trees and the importance of trees in mitigating climate change effects. Invite some members of the community to explain in their native language the benefits of planting trees.

Work with a local organization to produce brochures in a local language on climate change and how best to mitigate its impact.

The pilot program on climate resilience, described earlier in this Bulletin, is a project happening in the Kafue and Barotse basin that aims at helping communities adapt to climate change. This is mainly being done by engaging the local communities to write project proposals on projects they think will make their communities resilient to climate change -- such as the construction of canals to mitigate the effects of flooding.

Agriculture that does not promote the massive cutting of trees such as permaculture farming and also projects that encourage irrigation of crops must be done by community members, themselves, in order to increase the changes of long-term commitment and sustainability.

Trees are important also and communities have been encouraged to come up with initiatives that will help bring about more tree plantings in their communities.

The benefits of having trees around the communities are being explained -- such as having harvested harvesting fruits and the readily available of medicinal drugs -- made from trees.

Many of the people have expressed a willingness on the initiatives to plant trees and therefore the traditional or local leaders should be engaged to push forward this agenda.

The aspect of having a bottom-up approach in project design needs to be encouraged in the communities especially in the local planning meetings when it comes to community development.

This is one of the sure ways of enabling the communities' full participation in the projects.

Invite someone from a local NGO to talk about how they involve communities in project that they implement.

Ask a community leader how they distribute information they receive about projects.

Interview a traditional leader in your community and ask him/her about measures they have put in place to ensure that trees are protected.

If no measures are in place, ask them why.

Have environmental projects been implemented in your community without much community input? If so, how did the project turn out? What might have been done to encourage greater community participation in the project?

Invite a forestry official from your community to talk about how to care for trees. Create a panel discussion with environmentalists, forestry officials and community members and discuss what more can be done to discourage deforestation.

Work with a local NGO to organize a tree-planting activity in your community.

Ask listeners to call or to text their thoughts on the importance of planting trees and also encourage them to plant a tree.

Useful Link

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