



DEVELOPING RADIO PARTNERS

## Focus: Climate change

Climate change affects everyone, having looked at how it affects children and youth in past weeks, this bulletin looks at how older people are affected.

The people considered old are those from the age of 55 and above. This age group is mostly not very active as compared to the youths.

In Zambia, most elderly people live in the rural areas. This is because when most of them retire from jobs they leave the city to go and live in rural areas where they can do some basic farming in order to have enough to eat.

The retirement age is 55 years; most of the land they get in the rural areas is bare, without any trees. This is mostly due to charcoal burning or clearing of land for farming. The indiscriminate cutting of trees affects weather patterns – which, in turn, affect food production on which elderly people rely on to live.

# 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: Climate Change and the Elderly

The majority of elderly people live in rural areas where most their livelihood is spent farming. The change in weather patterns affects their source of income and livelihood.

When there is less rainfall there is usually a poor harvest that leads to food shortages in their homes. Poor harvests lead to lower incomes since they have less to sell.

Drought and high temperatures also affect older people in ways you may not realize. If they have animals, they may have to take their livestock long distances to find water.

For instance, in the rural area of Kapiri Mposhi, Mr. Mpasela, who

is in his 70's describes how he has had to move his cattle to a distant place to find water. It has not been easy for him considering that he lives alone with his wife. All his children have gone to the city to find employment.

He relates the challenges he has had due to changes in the weather pattern.

When he arrived in Kapiri Mposhi there were many trees, his well was full of water and there was good rainfall, but now there are few trees, little water and the rainy season is getting shorter.

Mr. Mpasela, who is 75, must walk to walk to the Lusenfwa River in order to get water – a distance of almost five kilometers from his home.

## Activities for Journalists

Zambia has already been experiencing climate change effects, including erratic rainfall, floods, droughts, dry spells, strong winds and thunderstorms. All of these changes have resulted in crop failure, disruption of hydroelectric power generation, and water shortages.

The drying up of streams such as the Chongwe and the Magoye Rivers, has been affecting the communities that usually rely on these rivers for water. Therefore, there is a need to protect the rivers from drying up so that people are not affected.

One thing the government has done is to make the Chongwe River deeper so that more water can be stored for use even during the periods when there is not enough rain. This initiative is important in that the Chongwe River runs through the rural areas where many communities largely depend on it for the supply of water.

Mr. Mpasela, the elderly farmer in Kapiri Mposhi, has tried to breed fish in his ponds near his small farm so that he can generate more money to invest in his gardens. However, he has been unsuccessful since the stream near his farm is continuously drying up.

To try to adapt to this situation he has started fish breeding during the rainy season and intends to

build a canal that will channel water from the Lusenfwa River to his farm. In addition, the canal will supply water to his crops.

How has climate change affected the elderly in your community? Interview several older people and find out. Ask them to describe their plight in detail.

What solutions have the elderly found to adapt to changing weather and water shortages? Organize a talk show with several elderly people who can describe their experiences?

Is the government doing anything to help elderly people adapt to weather changes? If not, why? If so, what is the government doing.

Interview government officials about what could be done to help the elderly. Also, interview any advocates or NGOs that help elderly people and find out what they are doing to assist those adapting to an ever-changing climate.

### Useful Link

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