DEVELOPING RADIO PARTNERS

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

Disaster Risk Reduction

Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) aims to reduce the damage caused by natural hazards like floods and droughts this is done through systems that alerts the communities in advance before a disaster occurs.

Disasters often follow natural hazards. A disaster's severity depends on how much impact a hazard has on society and the environment. The scale of the impact in turn depends on the choices we make for our lives and for our environment. These choices relate to how we grow our food, where and how we build our homes, what kind of government we have, how our financial system works and even what we teach in schools. Each decision and action makes us more vulnerable to disasters - or more resilient to them.

Disaster risk reduction is the concept and practice of reducing disaster risks by understanding them and taking steps to avoid them.

Reducing exposure to hazards, decreasing vulnerability of people and property, wise management of land and the environment, and improving preparedness and early warning for adverse events are all examples of disaster risk reduction. Disasters need to be managed at whatever level they happen. It is always wise to invest in the early warning systems.

Early Warning Systems

Risks arise from both the hazards and the vulnerabilities that are present. At present, many systems that are able to issue warnings for a number of natural hazards are in place. The Zambia metrological department produces weather bulletins through the electronic media that are also printed in newspapers to disseminate to the communities future weather activity. Community radio stations are also used to reach the communities about weather alerts.

Rain gauges are used to look at the levels of water in certain areas and if they exceed a certain threshold then the disaster management and mitigation unit is informed and alerts are sent to communities downstream about the possibility of flooding.

Yet, many communities don't understand the risk and vulnerabilities associated with weather emergencies. Therefore, preparedness programmes should be included in city planning; this way the community understands what weather warnings mean and what they need to do to prepare for them.

Different hazards are handled widely differently. Weather-related hazards are generally well covered through the national meteorological department and forecast accuracy has improved greatly over recent years.

These capacities still need to be extended to other hazards such as the production of toxic gases produced from mining communities. And this risk needs to be complemented by other risk reduction measures that are sorely missing.

There is the need to incorporate traditional and scientific knowledge to better adapt warning systems. Traditional knowledge can be documented and passed through the community radio stations. Traditional knowledge is most visibly seen by the communities and easy to understand.

For instance, when there is too much of certain fruits, such as masuku fruits, this suggests there might be less rainfall. Still, this traditional knowledge needs to be backed up with scientific knowledge. These are some of the things that need to be studied and documented and proven.

Activities for Journalists

It is essential that communities understand their risks; they must respect the warning service which is mainly done through the disaster and management.

The main hazards in Zambia are droughts, floods, epidemics, pests, environmental degradation, refugees, internally displaced persons, fires and accidents. These hazards are likely to increase in frequency and intensity due to the effects of climate change.

These disasters have had a negative impact on the economy, having caused loss of life, damage to property and degradation of the environment. Tremendous setbacks in economic growth and development have also been the main result, as scarce national resources have had to be redirected from productive investments to relief and emergency operations.

Clear, understandable warnings must reach those at risk. For people to understand the warnings they must contain clear, useful information that enables proper responses. Community level communication channels must be identified in advance and one authoritative voice established. This dissemination of warnings can be done through the community radio stations.

The traditional framework of early warning systems is composed of forecasting of a probable event, and then the dissemination of a warning or an alert that a catastrophe could happen.

Effective early warning systems require good coordination and accurate information as well as a variety of dissemination channels. It also means that the community and local leaders need to understand what the alerts mean and how to prepare for them.

In fact, public awareness and education are critical; in addition, many sectors must be involved – including schools.

There are a variety of stories that can be created on this topic.

What are some of the early warning systems used in your community? Does your community take these warnings seriously?

Do some people ignore these warnings? If so why?

Do the local schools receive early warning alerts? If not, why not?

Interview an expert from the Metrological department and disaster management and mitigation unit to find some of the technologies they are using in their early warning intervention. How effective are the early warning measures that they have? What type of warnings do they distribute? Could they do more?

Useful Links

Eneya Maseko. Oxfam GB Zambia, Disaster Risk Reduction Programs officer. 0966263024. EMaseko@oxfam.org.uk.

Dr Kanyanga. Zambia metrological department. Assistant Director. Jk Kanyanga@yahoo.com.

National Coordinator. Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit . Tel : +260 1255725. Email: dmmu@zamtel.zm.

Teddy Kabunda, Humanitarian Coordinator. 0977655952. tkabunda@oxfam.org.uk.

Martin Sishekanu, Adaptation specialist. Interim National climate change secretariat. martinsishekanu@znccs.org.zm.

Our Environment, Our Future is funded by the U.S. Embassy, Lusaka, Zambia and the Wyncote Foundation