

Zambia's Talking About the Weather and Doing Something Project Summary

Chongwe Radio is located in a rural area outside Lusaka. It's mostly farming country and farmers even work at the station.

Yet, before it began partnering with Developing Radio Partners, the radio station did no programs on climate smart agriculture. Today, with DRP-supplied digital recorders and laptops, it produces a weekly radio program and daily public service announcements as part of the DRP project aimed at helping farmers understand the weather and adapt to the changing climate.

In addition to the weekly radio programs and public service announcements, DRP also sponsors community activities – where as many as 300-400 people gather to learn about new farming techniques such as rain harvesting, new fuel efficient cooking stoves or to plant trees.

As a result of the project – which aims to help farmers get accurate weather information and adapt to climate change, Chongwe Radio has seen enormous change, itself, in the last year. Over the last several months, the community of listeners has come together to form what they are calling a “Radio Champions Group.” It was created to coordinate activities around the station – including the planting of trees and encouraging the use of organic and conservation farming. The group also raises funds to help keep the station sustainable.



Chongwe's Radio Champions Group, which has 89 members, has planted a huge number of trees – approaching 10,000 seedlings in the community.

Station manager Penias Tembo, who is also a farmer, says ‘from the time we started working with DRP, the status of programs on issues to do with climate change, conservation farming and tree planting have improved tremendously.’

He says the local government has taken notice of Chongwe's community service programming. Mr. Tembo says ‘the district administration under the District Commissioner Frazer Musonda has directed all government departments to buy radios for the offices so that they can start monitoring issues raised by the community on Chongwe Radio.’

DRP has received similar comments from its other dozen or so radio partners in Zambia – describing how

the project has empowered them and made their stations the place where people now turn for information about weather, agriculture and environmental issues.

DRP's radio partners have also become agents of change in their listening areas. Yatsani FM in Lusaka, organized a DRP-sponsored community activity on sanitation and hygiene in a local neighborhood hard hit by a cholera outbreak last year. Hundreds of citizens took part in a day of music, poetry, dance, drama and speeches. As a result the Lusaka City Council and community members launched an intensive trash pick-up campaign in the neighborhood. There were no new outbreaks of cholera in this neighborhood and not a single outbreak in the spring of 2017.

Yatsani producer Maybin Katungulu says DRP has helped him and the other reporters at his station understand the importance of waste management. He says the neighborhood "now carries out monthly cleanups which have led to other communities to follow suit."

The Lusaka-based station has also been one of several partner stations that have been on the front line of a movement to halt deforestation. Yatsani hosted a DRP-sponsored community activity on tree planting. Among the attendees was a Member of Parliament. He was so taken by the event that he pushed for and helped pass legislation banning the indiscriminate cutting of trees in the country.

As a result of its partnership with DRP, Mkushi Radio in Central Zambia now works closely with an organization called the Conservation Unit in teaching farmers about adaptive farming techniques. As a result of radio programs featuring C-U participants more than 600 farmers in Mkushi have adopted some conservation farming methods. Station manager Boniface Susa says such partnerships would never have occurred without DRP's involvement with the station. He writes: "DRP has deeply enriched our programming and our staff benefited a lot in terms of acquiring the knowledge and skills in reporting accurately about climate issues. We will continue to produce such programs even after the project finishes."

While DRP provides monthly stipends to its partner radio stations to cover the costs associated with covering stories, it does not pay the stations to broadcast the weekly radio programs and public service announcements. It's all part of DRP's plan to make each program sustainable so that once the project concludes, the program continues. Overall, more than 80% of the partner stations continue to produce the weekly programs long after DRP's departure because they are popular and generate revenue. Some radio partners even continue to send monthly reports and radio programs years after the project has ended.

For DRP, it's all about relationship building and trust with its partners so that they can build strong relationships and credibility with their own communities.