



Climate Information Centres: Enhancing equitable access to climate information

The challenge

Information is a key resource for rural farmers in Northern Ghana, and elsewhere in Africa, to improve their income and food security in the face of risks and opportunities posed by climate variability and change. They also need a voice – opportunities to raise their concerns, share their knowledge, and ask important questions. There are many challenges in sharing information with and amplifying the voice of smallholder farmers, especially in Northern Ghana. Often, appropriate information is simply not available. Even where it is available, it is normally not in the modes – language, medium and frame that they could easily access, relate to, understand and use. Agro-climatic information is typically very technical and scientific and this discourages farmers from using even the little information that they access. Furthermore, climate communication methodologies are often top down, expert-driven and one-way with information presented as instructions.

Public, private and community radio stations, due to their reach and popularity among small-scale farming families, are important providers of extension services. But often, broadcasters have low or limited capacity to produce programs which are scientifically well-founded, and compelling and entertaining with farmers. In Northern Ghana their access to a radio set is also low, even though it is a main source of information.

Introducing Climate Information Centres

In 2014, Farm Radio International partnered with CARE's Adaptation Learning Programme (ALP) to establish two climate information centres (CIC's) in Tariganga and Saamini communities in the Upper East and Northern Regions of Ghana respectively. Equipped with modern communication installations, CICs are aimed at enhancing smallholder farmers' equitable access to climate forecasts and advisories to support climate resilient livelihood activities. The centres enable communities to have a voice in determining information that is relevant to informing their decisions and actions for managing risk and adaptation to climate variability and change.

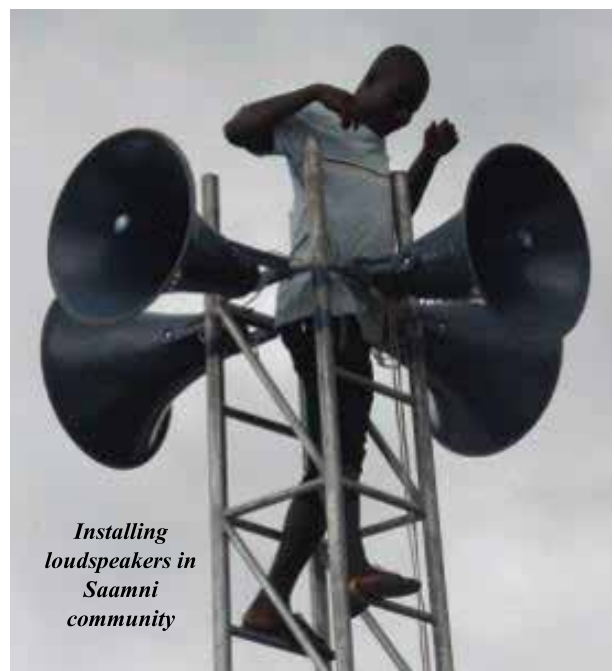
The stakeholders involved with CICs and their roles are presented in the Table below.

Stakeholder	Role
CIC operators	These are nominated members of the communities who manage the CICs e.g. recording and broadcasting programs (especially those that are climate related) from local radio stations, broadcast of public information.
Local FM radio stations (<i>Quality and Eagle FM</i>)	Design and broadcast climate related programs that feature the voices and perspectives of farmers, experts (e.g. from agriculture, disaster risk management) and other stakeholders.
Farm Radio International	Train the communities to manage the CICs and support local radio station personnel to produce informative and engaging farmer programs that are aired in local languages
Ghana Meteorological Agency (GMET)	Communicate weather and climate information relevant to rural farmers through the CICs and engage in radio talk shows based on demand.
ALP	Engage communities in climate vulnerability and capacity analysis to formulate adaptation strategies, from which establishment of CICs was born. ALP has been creating linkages and dialogue between the various stakeholders, most recently including Esoko – a private climate information provider

How does it work?

Local FM radio stations develop climate programmes, especially before and during the rainfall season in Northern Ghana that runs from April to October. A key source of information is the Participatory Scenario Planning (PSP) workshop, a multi-stakeholder forum to access and translate seasonal climate forecasts and communicate decision relevant advisories. The information communicated includes: climate forecasts, advice on agricultural techniques and inputs for each climate scenario, rainfall requirements and timing for the range of crop activities, and market information.

CIC operators record the radio programmes and replay them at strategic times when they know community members can listen to the information. To reach all audiences, loudspeakers are installed in popular meeting places such as markets and village centres. CICs also broadcast early warning information such as on disease outbreaks and prevention, enabling response teams to quickly mobilise. For the Saamini community CIC, the operators are improving their skills in producing relevant radio programs. In April 2016, they hosted their own local talk show to talk about land preparation, which was a key community concern at the time. This gave an opportunity for community members who attended PSP to give their perspectives from the workshop.



*Installing
loudspeakers in
Saamni
community*

Impacts

The CICs have improved access to climate and related agricultural information, by capitalising on integrated communication channels that have a better reach to both men and women. ‘If men own a radio then they often keep it in their room so their wife doesn’t have access to it but the catchment of the CIC reaches far – people can hear all the advice about a particular crop or when the rains are coming – women are able to get this information’, says Alem Nicolas. As members of the community are all getting the same information at the same time, CICs are creating a common platform for communities to discuss climate information and relate it to local decision making.

CICs are also encouraging a feedback process between community members, technical services and GMET. Through radio call-in programs held soon after PSP workshops, communities can ask questions to better understand the seasonal forecast and advisories. They can also demand for support services such as provision of a particular type of seed from the ministry of agriculture to enable them act on advisories communicated.



Checking the equipment in the CIC in Tariganga community. Nicola Ward/ALP, 2015

Challenges

Communities would like to have more the radio stations to broadcast more locally relevant radio programs, but the challenge is raising money to pay for the air time. For example, in Tariganga community, there is interest in asking Quality FM to have radio programs specifically addressing their issues at different times in a season. Previous projects that have supported the initiative have closed down, and the community is thinking of innovative ways to raise funds for the CICs such as through renting the space and equipment for cultural festivals. However, continued support from local administration will be key to sustaining CICs and the resulting benefits.

More Information

- Decision-making for climate resilient livelihoods and risk reduction: A Participatory Scenario Planning approach http://careclimatechange.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/ALP_PSP_EN.pdf
- Facing Uncertainty: The value of climate information for adaptation, risk reduction and resilience in Africa http://careclimatechange.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/C_Comms_Brief.pdf
- Joto Afrika Issue 12 http://careclimatechange.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/JotoAfrika12_FINAL.pdf

ALP: <http://careclimatechange.org/our-work/alp>

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The Adaptation Learning Program (ALP) for Africa aims to increase the capacity of vulnerable households in sub-Saharan Africa to adapt to climate change and climate variability. Since 2010, ALP has been working with communities, government institutions and civil society organisations in Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique and Niger to ensure that community-based adaptation approaches and actions are integrated in development policies and programmes. This is achieved through the demonstration and dissemination of innovative approaches for CBA, supported by practical tools, methodologies and evidence of impact. ALP is also working to create an enabling environment for CBA by working with civil society groups to influence national and international policy frameworks and financing mechanisms for adaptation.

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Front banner: Farmer in Northern Ghana. Credit: Kalian Gumah Sampoia/ALP 2016

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