

Local communities need weather and climate information that is relevant, easy to understand and practical

Using audience research to design media and communication to support rural communities to prepare and adapt to climate change in northern Kenya

Caroline Mwende
BBC Media Action - Kenya

BACKGROUND

In recent years, Kenya has been experiencing the impact of climate change as evidenced by frequent droughts and floods. These changing weather patterns are negatively impacting lives and livelihoods with communities suffering water scarcity, food insecurity, economic losses and inter-communal conflicts.

Under the Down2Earth project, funded by the European Commission, BBC Media Action has been supporting five local radio stations in northern Kenya to produce media content that provides rural communities in Kenya with weather and climate information as well as information on how to cope better with the challenges brought about by climate change.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Qualitative evaluative research was conducted to assess the extent to which the radio programmes were effective in providing information that target audiences found relevant and useful in helping them prepare and cope better with challenges brought about by changing weather and climate patterns.

METHODOLOGY

Data was obtained through 24 face-to-face focus group discussions and 30 in-depth interviews with radio programme listeners.

RESULTS

Listeners liked that the radio programmes were broadcast in their local languages and the weather experts featured used less jargon

They appreciated that the recommended coping techniques were practical and easily implemented at household or community level. E.g. water harvesting, planting kitchen gardens and drought resistant crops

The programmes were effective in prompting listeners to discuss the topics they had heard; mainly with family, friends and other people in their communities

Many listeners benefitted from advice they'd heard on the programmes and shared that it has made 'life easier for them' and made their families feel 'happier'.

Women in particular said they had more cash to spend on their families and they were healthier from the vegetables they'd grown.

CONCLUSION

It was evident that BBC Media Action was able to support the radio stations to produce media content that not only met the climate and weather information needs of their audiences but also motivated audiences to implement coping mechanisms.



Elizabeth, a Radio Jangwani listener in Marsabit County, standing next to her kitchen garden that she planted after listening to the radio programmes.

An Ekeyekon Radio listener shared:

"The radio programme told us that we should strive to be self-reliant and not have to depend on men all the time.

They told us that when rains start, we should prepare our farms and start planting crops, and also start kitchen gardens near the house.

Many women in this village have started doing so and we are happy because in the past only men used to have money, but now even us women can have money from selling vegetables."

Female, Naoros, audience member of Ekeyekon Radio