



Weather Wise: Co-producing Weather and Climate Radio Content for Farmers, Fishermen and Pastoralists in East Africa



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Aim of the project

Weather Wise is a project under the WISER programme that aims to strengthen the capacity of media professionals and technical experts to respond to the climate and weather information needs of farmers, fishermen and pastoralists living in northern Kenya (Turkana and Marsabit), coastal Kenya (Kwale) and the Lake Victoria regions of Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya (Homa Bay) through the production and broadcast of weather and climate radio content.



Dates

July 2018–October 2020



Countries

Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania



Albert Mwanyasi interviews an elderly female pastoralist, who reported that her entire village had moved south from Kargi to Kambinye (about 30 kilometres away) in Marsabit County, northern Kenya, in search of water and suitable pastures for their families and animals. (Source: D. Njeru, 2019)

Aim of co-production:

The aim of the co-production is to provide a platform for journalists to work with scientists to pass on weather and climate information through radio programming that is contextually relevant, accurate, timely and that can be used by farmers, fishermen and pastoralists for decision-making.

Context:

In the early stages of the project, audience research found that the target audiences of farmers, fishermen and pastoralists did not trust scientific forecasting, because it was not well understood, and, instead, mostly relied on their indigenous knowledge of weather and climate. They recognised that their environment is changing but did not fully understand why. Audiences did, however, acknowledge that some forms of traditional forecasting are becoming less reliable, but they were cautious of the scientific approach to weather predictions. Journalists had little knowledge of how to communicate weather and climate information and felt that scientists were not willing to engage with them. Scientists, on the other hand, were also reluctant to work with journalists, saying that they tended to distort and politicise their message. BBC Media Action partnered with eight local radio stations and built their capacity to produce weekly weather and climate radio content in local languages.

Who was involved and what were their roles?

Senior Broadcast Mentor David Njuguna provides remote and on-the-job training in the production of weekly weather and climate radio content to eleven journalists working at the eight partner radio stations. These journalists also attended several workshops to build their radio production skills, increase their knowledge of climate change and foster good relationships with scientists and technical experts. While a large part of the capacity development was facilitated by the Senior Broadcast Mentor, experiential learning contributed to their capacity development at workshops such as the Greater Horn of Africa Climate Outlook Forum (GHACOF), led by IGAD Climate Prediction and Applications Centre (ICPAC), the project's residential workshops, led by BBC Media Action, and Africa Climate Week, led by the Met Office.

Albert Mwanyasi is a radio producer at Sifa FM, one of the partner stations located in Marsabit County, northern Kenya. David Njuguna has been mentoring Albert in identifying audience needs, researching content, writing scripts, interviewing skills, editing and packaging stories and capturing audience feedback. Albert works closely with experts, including the local meteorological agency, agricultural extension officers, veterinary and livestock experts, as well as community health volunteers. He interviews these experts and has them break down technical information and scientific jargon that audiences struggle to understand. The experts also explain how weather is forecast, provide accurate weather forecasts and give intelligible advice that listeners can use to make practical decisions that improve their livelihoods.

How was co-production done?

The Weather Wise project provides opportunities for journalists and scientists to work together in the production of weather and climate content for rural audiences whose livelihoods are most affected by climate change.

Identify key actors and build partnerships

At the initial phase of the project, formative research was carried out to identify populations living in the target areas most affected by climate change. The research revealed that farmers, fishermen and pastoralists are the most vulnerable as their livelihoods are heavily dependent on the weather. These groups became the project's target audiences.

What was co-produced?



The eight radio partners have produced and broadcast over 250 programmes to date. They produce different content based on the information needs of their respective audiences, including radio features, dramatised public service announcements (PSAs) and short magazines, while others produce and present live programmes. For example:

- Albert produces a three-minute, weekly, radio feature called *Hali ya Hewa na Mifugo* (Climate Change and Pastoralism) that educates farmers and pastoralists in northern Kenya on the impact of climate change on their livelihoods and what they can do to adapt.
- Vivian from Maata Radio (Turkana, Kenya) produces a one-hour interactive radio programme called *Nee Nkosi* (Our Home) that targets pastoralists living in northern Kenya.
- Jeremiah from Gulf Radio (Homa Bay, Kenya) produces a programme called *Tich Tiyore* (Let's Work) that targets farmers and fishermen around Lake Victoria in Kenya.
- Elias from Radio Kwizera (Tanzania) produces a programme called *Hali ya Hewa* (The Weather) that targets farmers and fishermen around Lake Victoria in Tanzania.



Benefits of the co-production approach

- Scientists' and journalists' co-production of radio content ensures that the information passed on to audiences is accurate, contextually relevant and can be easily applied in their lives. During interviews, journalists help scientists/technical experts to simplify scientific jargon to aid audiences' understanding.
- Through building common ground, journalists and scientists were able to rebuild trust based on a mutual acceptance that they are all trying to pass on lifesaving information to affected communities. Scientists now feel confident that the journalists are not politicising forecasts, and journalists feel they can seek guidance from the scientists to help them better understand the technical information so that it can be communicated in simple language to the audience.
- Co-production helped challenge social norms. An improved understanding of how and why weather patterns are changing, as well as an increased trust in the scientific forecast, means that community members can make decisions informed by multiple knowledge sources, including traditional forecasts.

The research also sought to understand why scientists were so reluctant to work with journalists and why journalists avoided engaging scientists in their programmes. It was evident that building trust between scientists and journalists was imperative to the success of the project.

Build common ground and co-explore need

BBC Media Action held three residential workshops that brought together journalists from eight partner stations, scientists from local meteorological agencies and technical experts from the agriculture, fisheries and livestock sector to build the journalists' capacity to communicate weather and climate information to farmers, fishermen and pastoralists in their respective counties. The aim of these workshops was to:

- improve journalists' understanding of issues related to climate change and build their production skills;
- help journalists and scientists understand audiences' knowledge, attitude and perceptions around scientific forecasting based on the findings of the formative research;
- build scientists' understanding of how media content is produced and how to have maximum impact with audiences when delivering interviews; and
- improve relationships between journalists and scientists in order to allow for the continuous co-production of weather and climate media content.

For the scientists, understanding the needs of audiences and how media content is produced, helped build trust between journalists and scientists. The scientist recognised that the purpose of the programme is not political, but is aimed at providing what could be lifesaving information to the communities they serve.

Co-deliver solutions

During the residential workshops, scientists and journalists co-produced a mock programme together and mapped different experts that the journalists could interview for their future programmes. This helped both parties understand how each sector works and how relationships and contacts established during the training would work moving forward. If a climate scientist felt that the topic of discussion was not his/her area of specialisation, he/she would refer the journalists to a more relevant expert in that field.

Journalists and scientists have since developed a rapport that allows them to reach out to each other to co-produce radio content for the target audience. Journalists find scientists more receptive to participating in co-production of the weather and climate radio content. Scientists have also been reaching out to journalists when they have important and urgent information that they would like to share with audiences.

Evaluate

Audiences regularly call into the station to provide feedback on the programmes, request information and suggest topics to be addressed in future programmes. This feedback is used to improve the quality of the radio programmes, meet the needs of the audience and understand the impact the programmes are having on their livelihoods. Audiences report increased knowledge and access to contextually relevant weather and climate radio content, with some reporting having used it to improve their livelihood.

Lessons to learn from:

- **Understand how both media and science sectors work:** Each sector should know the protocols to follow. A scientist may, for example, have all the relevant information about upcoming heavy rains that the journalist needs, but they are not allowed to be interviewed by the media without a written request to the meteorological office, which may take weeks. Similarly, journalists have different roles in their stations, and they are not the final authority on what is aired when scientists want to share information. Having a good relationship between them will help manage each other's expectations.
- **Create networks between journalists and scientists:** Journalists are not experts in climate science, and they need experts on their programmes to ensure that the information being passed on is accurate. Scientists, on the other hand, are not communication experts. They need to work with journalists to ensure that the information they are passing on to audiences can be easily understood.
- **Understand radio audience's weather and climate information needs:** An awareness of media consumption patterns/preferences and knowledge, attitudes and perceptions around climate change enables journalists to put themselves into the shoes of the audience and provide information that is relevant to the context in which they live. For example, fishermen need wind speed information. Farmers need rain forecasts. Reliable, accurate, timely information in a user-friendly format can be used by farmers, fishermen and pastoralists to make practical decisions that can improve their livelihoods.
- **Target audiences have some deeply rooted social norms that prevent the uptake of scientific forecasts:** Developing content that addresses these norms and encourages behaviour change requires a long-term, more targeted approach. There is also a need to link indigenous knowledge with scientific forecasting by including indigenous weather knowledge experts in the co-production process.

'I believe the programme is having an impact on the audience because many listeners call the station and me directly saying how they are learning and benefiting from it. For example, after receiving a weather forecast that the amount of rains would be lower that season, I advised farmers to plant immediately the rains began. Those who took my advice called me later to report that they harvested, unlike their counterparts who delayed.'

– Agricultural expert
in Tanzania

'This time round the rains did not affect us as negatively as previous seasons, and this is because we got information from the programme in time. I have also learnt from your programme better farming techniques like digging terraces that help prevent the topsoil/crops from being carried off by the rain water.'

– SMS feedback from a
Maata Radio listener

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