

Case Study 11 - Climate Airwaves

Climate Airwaves is a project for building capacity among community radio broadcasters to investigate the local impact of climate change. The vision behind the project was to build the confidence of broadcasters to do stories by developing their skills in doing action research with communities on how climate change is changing their lives and to identify areas where they felt they could have an impact. The result of the process and the programming was also designed to engage with the research and policy communities highlighting to highlight these impacts and push for change.

Lead institution: IDS, Ghana Community Radio, Africa Adapt

Climate communication aims

The communication aims are to improve the ability for radio broadcasters, who are able to reach to a much wider audiences, to communicate with and engage with their audiences on climate change issues. It is also designed in a way that encourages the broadcaster and audience to learn together and feed this learning into wider research and policy communities to influence new thinking.

Fit with categorical considerations for climate communication (see Table 1)

Inform and educate individuals about climate change - inform on science (including level of consensus and magnitude of the problem); inform on causes; inform on current and potential impacts; Inform on possible solutions; inform on risk management; inform on adaptation practices

Achieve some type and level of social engagement/action - encourage action/behaviour that encourages 'forward-learning'/adaptation; encourage action which helps people to adapt or reduce their vulnerability and/or exposure; encourage political/civic action across unusual boundaries or scales

Bring about changes in social norms and cultural values - - Influencing values through early education; influencing on climate "smart" or "resilient" thinking/planning; Influencing values through pervasive modelling

Communications/social learning characteristics

Good community radio already has good strong ties to local knowledge and a lot of experience of investigating and advocating for different local issues. However, it was discovered that lots of local broadcasters felt they did not have the legitimacy or confidence to investigate an issue like climate change. Comments like "I am not a scientist so I cannot investigate climate change" were a familiar refrain. This lack of confidence was exacerbated by not having enough understanding of the global context in which to situate the local implications. This lack of understanding of the drivers of global climate change meant Broadcasters were actually blaming communities for the environmental degradation etc.

Climate Airwaves was a pilot that tried to encourage a more participative environment for learning about climate change by turning some of their thinking towards a more rights based, social justice angle which is a familiar angle for community radio. The action research dimension encouraged broadcasters to play more of an intermediary role between the

community who they were researching and the policy makers or other local stakeholders that they needed to talk to.

The 18 month pilot was implemented in three phases, all of which have a relevant dimension for social learning.

The First phase was about building the basic understanding of climate change through training workshops - multiple training sessions – first one from a local partner and then from IDS. As much different and varied information as was felt relevant was provided on a pen drive. The content was aimed at Climate Justice – but with good information on the global context, the impacts of this for Ghana as well as an understanding of the relevance for development – a total of 5.5 days of training time. Baseline assessments carried out by Ghana Radio of the broadcaster’s knowledge and that of the local stakeholders helped IDS know who they were working with in order to give them the right support.

The second phase – piloted with one station - was an action research workshop where the team went together to trial an action research methodology framework using real issues. This included mapping as well as investigation. The broadcasters then came together for a production workshop to choose their themes. The themes were then shared in a “durba” or regional forum and refined with their audience resulting in a next iteration. This process managed to attract people to come and share their ideas and get involved from the district assemblies who had hereto refused to connect over the issue. This event was followed by a national forum with stakeholders and donors – 130 people - participating in a big meeting in Accra where the findings and methodology of the project were presented.

A lot of documentation on project methodology is now in the process of being shared through AMARC – World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters to try and persuade other radio broadcasters to get involved.

This project demonstrates more about developing an environment for social learning than simply a linear process of sharing information. It demonstrates a number of successful criteria for a social learning project – embedding communications in local processes and structures, responding to communities needs and empowering people to develop their thinking around the issues relevant to them and feeding these back for further reflection and development together.

Linear/Looped scorecard: 3/3

Audience

The audience for the broadcasts were the local listeners – the community itself and their local policy makers. The stakeholders involved in contributing to the process of building the stories and sharing the knowledge are a critical part of those engaged in the process. In this context they are the audience also.

Getting research into use (how this case study does or does not contribute to that)

This project demonstrates a good example of developing an action research project relevant to a very local context, investigating the key issues with the right local stakeholders and then sharing their knowledge in the most appropriate ways. The increased dialogue and discussion refined the knowledge further. Three local radio stations closely situated in a region came up

with three different story lines that were very locally context specific demonstrates the importance of relevance for getting ideas adopted.

Evolution of the project (how has the project evolved or developed if known)

Climate airwaves started with three radio stations chosen on their proximity to one another. This was a factor of cost - if there had been more money more stations could have been included. Each of the stations identified different issues but ended up talking about different things – sea level rise, low crop yields, droughts and flood. Three different languages were used for the three different stations.

Challenges and questions

- Community radio is not always trusted – there are some good and some less good.
- Community radio can be poor quality, have poor messaging, and be politicised. In this case there was active selection of radio stations where there was a chance of success and a more plural media.
- The importance of working with existing networks. This kind of model won't work everywhere and cannot be imposed. There needs to be support for strengthening endogenous capacity for coordinating i.e. to strengthen the capacity of existing networks so that they can be drawn up on. In this case there were good existing networks of NGOs and CSOs strongly linked to community groups which could be drawn upon
- Gender was a challenge in terms of keeping a balance – women had less capacity to engage. Radio broadcasters are volunteers in general and women needed more training because of lower education levels. One example cited was an extra day and half of training for women on the climate science issues.
- Sustainability is also a big issue – capacity is lost very quickly because the broadcasters and participants are volunteers and then the process has to start again.

Takeaways

Where robust networks are present there is a lot of potential to develop an action research methodology as a way of investigating and sharing learning on local issues. There is evidence from this pilot that the radio station has adopted the action research methodology, adapted it and branded it as its own and will be using it again. But with such high resources and in difficult political situations this might be more difficult to use in other situations.

CCAFS theme: This initiative fits broadly under CCAFS theme 4.

Links

Climate airwaves website <http://www.climate-airwaves.net/>

IDS description of the project <http://www.ids.ac.uk/idsproject/climate-airwaves>