

Impact of Radio Lake Victoria in climate change awareness

By Dr. Moses Owuor Oyier OSIENALA (Friends of Lake Victoria)

Vernacular radio programmes are among the most effective ways of conducting community sensitization on climate change and environment related issues. Radio Lake Victoria 92.1 FM is one of the stations that is on environmental education and community empowerment through interactive programmes. Founded in 1990s, the station has been in the forefront of sensitizing the communities living around Lake Victoria on issues related to environment.



The radio listeners constitute the fishing folk on Lake Victoria but signals reach a wider area around the Lake that covers Tanzania and Uganda hence an appropriate medium to broadcast issues of transboundary resources such as Lake Victoria. Many programmes that touch directly on the lives of the community members and their environment are aired daily.

According to Mr. Samuel Nyabola, one of the listeners of Radio Lake Victoria, environmental conservation programmes aired through the channel has increased community participation in environmental conservation. It also forms part of the early warning system for community members by disseminating information from meteorological department in a language that is understood by the community. Through the early warning system, the fishing communities are made aware of the prevailing winds and the rainfall patterns so that they can make informed decisions of when to go to the lake for fishing activities. This helps in reducing the danger which is associated with storm while navigating in the lake. *“Radio Lake Victoria has saved many lives and we rely on it for information about what goes on in our environment”*. Said Mr. Jaboda from Sindio Beach.

Radio Lake Victoria is one of the stations with the largest listenership in the area, civil society organizations working on environmental conservation and climate change awareness have used the station as a way of communicating to the

community members their role in environmental conservation. Various subjects have been discussed in the interactive sessions giving the members opportunity to ask questions and get responses in their areas of interest. According to Mr. Jaboda from Sindo in Homa Bay county, the programs have helped them to know the crops that can do well with the changing patterns of rainfall and how to get the seeds. The radio programme explains to listeners cropping practices and management .The knowledge they learn has enabled them to get good yields amidst erratic rainfall caused by climate change.

Through the programs, the community members are now aware of climate change and the common human activities that contribute to it. They are now aware of the value of tree planting and the role of trees in climate change mitigation. On public health, the community is educated on waste disposal and has been discouraged from open defecation which contributes to the spread of water borne diseases.

There is evidence that Radio Lake Victoria 92.1 FM is instrumental in creating awareness and sensitizing community members about climate change. *“We are now aware of the role of trees in our environment, there has been improved sanitation and reduction of water borne diseases”*. said Mr. Nyabola. Mr. Jaboda said that those who are working towards ensuring that the Lake Victoria basin community is resilient and adapted to climate change should use Radio Lake Victoria.
