

Community Radio, climate change and development in Ghana

Policy recommendations

Invest in building capacity of Community Radio broadcasters to inform and support local people's input into policy and research decisions and dialogues on climate change adaptation.

Use Community Radio as a tool for creating evidence-based policy that draws on the experience and knowledge of communities affected by climate change impacts.

Draw on Community Radio's ability to understand climate change in the context of human rights, governance and existing drivers of poverty and inequality, especially at local and district level.

Climate change in Ghana

Ghana faces some serious risks from climate change impacts, including: water stress; land degradation; and coastal zone erosion.

These impacts are likely to lead to a drop in agricultural production, a loss of coastal land and power shortages. In turn, these changes can exacerbate existing issues in other sectors, including health, education and food security. There is also the possibility that new and complex problems will arise as a result of climate change, such as internal and cross-border migration and conflict.

Why invest in Community Radio to support climate change adaptation?

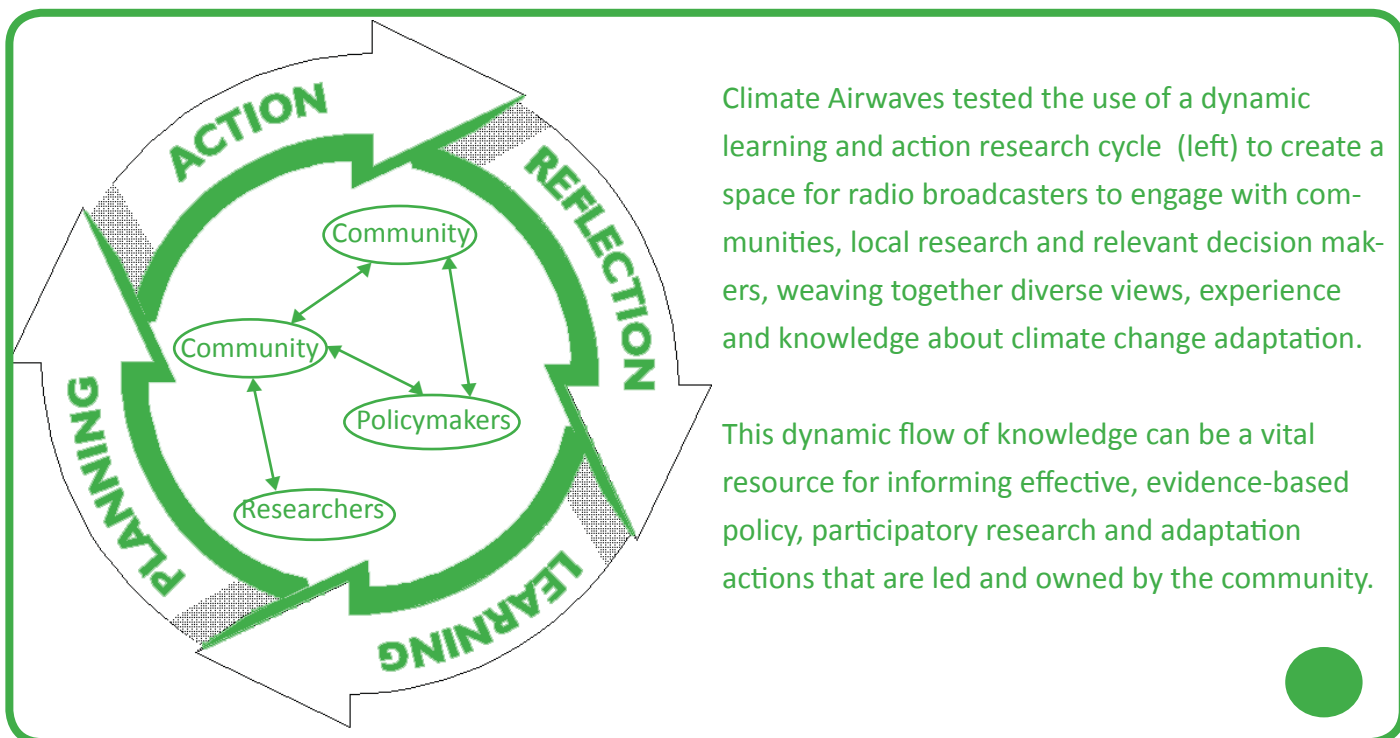
These findings are based on a pilot project, Climate Airwaves, which ran from June 2010 to July 2011 and included three stations: Radio Ada, Radio Afram Plains and Radio Tongu. Climate Airwaves piloted a methodology for strengthening the capacity of the Community Radio stations to engage in action research and advocacy on climate change adaptation. Broadcasters also used climate research to inform communities and build knowledge to participate in policy decisions.



A man stands where his home used to be in Azizakpe, Ada

Benefits of Community Radio

- **Ghana's most popular media channel**, ahead of television, newspapers or the internet.
(Bowen and Goldstein 2010)
- Able to **keep up with rapid change** in policy and environmental changes; **turn complex climate research into simple broadcast** formats; and give in-depth reporting on community impacts of climate change.
- Involves local people and gets community **feedback into policy and research**, not just talking at them. They feel ownership and are more likely to act in coherent, connected way.
(AFRRI 2008)
- **Low production costs**, stations are usually staffed by volunteers.
- **The majority of people can access radio** and have their voice heard in their local language, whether men, women, old or young.
(AMARC Africa and Panos Southern Africa 1998)
- Community Radio broadcasters usually have a **genuine, long-term connection to local communities** and a better understanding of local context than an external researcher or journalist.



Climate Airwaves tested the use of a dynamic learning and action research cycle (left) to create a space for radio broadcasters to engage with communities, local research and relevant decision makers, weaving together diverse views, experience and knowledge about climate change adaptation.

This dynamic flow of knowledge can be a vital resource for informing effective, evidence-based policy, participatory research and adaptation actions that are led and owned by the community.

Key findings and challenges for capacity building with Community Radio in Ghana

1 Through community radio communities can **feel ownership and involvement in the knowledge-sharing process**. To achieve this, climate change is framed as integral to questions of rights, politics, access and duties that are relevant to their lives. The Climate Airwaves pilot project created a space for communities to challenge existing ideas and power structures that perpetuate inequality, which in turn affect a community's ability to adapt to climate change and reduce poverty.

2 Climate research can be an intimidating and complicated subject to report, especially for volunteer broadcasters with limited formal education. **Capacity building, field visits** to communities affected by climate-related impacts, and engagement with local research means radio journalists are better able to understand and communicate the challenges of climate change.

3 **Female radio journalists may need special training**, including women-only sessions, to build confidence and address existing power dynamics created by education access and inequity.

4 **Locally-appropriate terms and analogies** are needed to explain important climate-related concepts (for example, in the pilot project participants did not know what a greenhouse was, and therefore the analogy of the 'greenhouse effect' was useless). Climate Airwaves is developing a **'climate change glossary'** in local languages for broadcasters.

Broadcasters and communities may **confuse climate change impacts with other environmental issues**, such as deforestation and ozone layer depletion, which have received wide media coverage in the past.

Understanding the **connection between global drivers of climate change and its local impacts** is a major challenge for broadcasters and their communities. This often leads to blaming climate change on the communities themselves, or even on minority groups within the community, rather than recognising it as a shared challenge. Raising awareness of these local/global interactions and avoiding divisive politics of blame requires ongoing investment.

Radio is a useful tool for **gathering testimonies** from community members about their experiences. **Local knowledge can be engaged** and explored in parallel with other forecasting/adaptation methods.

Donors and governments need to encourage sustainable partnerships between broadcasters, researchers and communities. Long-term funding ensures the lessons learnt in the early stages are built upon and shared.

Communities face multiple challenges. Building overall resilience needs support that **focuses on overall capacity building** of the Community Radio stations, such as the approach used by Climate Airwaves. This can bring benefits to the stations' work on other issues like health or poverty reduction.

For more information and recommended reading:
www.climate-airwaves.org

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