

Country: Kenya

Focus of case study: Early Warning

Summary: Adequate communication is fundamental to all aspects of drought cycle management. Without it, drought early warning systems cannot function, and local organizations and outsiders cannot plan, implement or monitor activities. However, communication is very difficult in drought-prone areas. The drylands in Kenya are vast, roads are poor, electricity is rare, and telecommunications infrastructure is sparse. Postal services are slow and unreliable. Local people speak various languages, and literacy rates are very low. Information often travels only as fast as a lorry on a rutted road—or at walking pace if there are no roads.

The potential of radios is shown by a point-to-point service established by the Garba Tulla Development Office (GTDO) in the Isiolo District, Kenya. This service was established with support from UNICEF as part of a recovery program after the 1992 drought. Radio equipment was set up at 10 locations in the district, and operators (mainly women) were trained on how to operate and maintain the equipment. The operators are paid by the local deedha council. Radio operators act as mail carriers: they gather items of news from local people and transmit these to other stations. They also report what they hear on their radio set to the local people. This system has enhanced interaction among different communities in the area, and has strengthened the decision making process by the deedha councils. Information on livestock markets has improved, as has management of grazing and water. The radios have even contributed to local security: the quick exchange of information has cut the number of bandit attacks and has helped recover animals stolen in raids.

Class of adaptation practice: exchange

External support: leadership, informational, technical, financial

Local rural institutions: social

External institutions: social

Capacity building: technical skills, information exchange/ coordination among groups, ability to plan and strategize, ability to maintain livelihood during environmental hazards, inclusion of women

Source: UNFCCC Local Coping Strategies Database: “Point-to-point radio in Isiolo, Kenya.”