

Using Radio and Television Media to fight Climate Change: Echoes from Ghana.

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This study is making a point of using diverse forms of media to fight climate change anywhere at the global level. A sample of 500 adult audience of 15 radios and television stations in Southern Ghana (a part of Central region) were randomly selected to participate in a study to assess their knowledge of the effect of climate change and what they are prepared to do to minimize its effect at the community level. The presence of various media had created sufficient demand for their utilization by greater number of people in urban and rural areas. Diverse opinions could be assessed for the use of the media for which they continually use. Research officers from the health institution who were also interested in radio and television agreed to organize a survey to find out how they could use the mass media to improve the knowledge base of local inhabitants on reducing the effects of climate change.

Community durbars were organized to inform people on the need to acquire new knowledge on the climate change phenomenon which most of the adults were aware of but not known as climate change. Most of the people had been talking about the change in rainfall patterns and its diverse effects on plants, crops, animals, rivers and human beings. Their understanding had been that the world was coming to an end, or some spell had been cast on them by an unknown super force elsewhere in the universe.

The sample population was interviewed in their homes at the start of the study and their knowledge level on climate change effect on the environment was recorded. For three months they were treated to the knowledge that, it directly affects five components of the environment: water, air, weather, oceans and ecosystems. Open learning sessions were instituted for the sample population in the evenings using the principles of informal education. Ten people were selected from each of the fifty communities to participate in the learning sessions. Each group received the same learning materials for the same duration. The facilitators used video, television, radio and social media to organize the learning sessions. The medium of teaching and expression was in the local language, and every participant was conversant with. The study was set up in a double blind fashion to reduce the risk of any bias.

Initially, 12% of the sample population could only state that climate change can directly affect water and oceans and there was nothing they could do. They were not aware that an assessment would be taken orally at the end of the survey period. Assessment at the end of the study period showed 80% of the population was able to state correctly the five components of the environment directly affected by climate change. Also, 65% argued that the human population could reduce the effects easily with community education,

organization, and resources mobilization. 73% formed climate change clubs in their communities during the period. It was amazing to the researchers that people given a little push and learning motivation can be innovative, take their destiny into their own hands, and come up with unthinkable but viable ideas to solve human and environmental issues. These clubs had become focal points for organizing community initiatives for local developmental initiatives. The participants expressed their sincere thanks that such an initiative had come to them at this time that the climate change is affecting their human developmental, socio-economic and cultural systems. Now, to them, the way forward towards mitigating and adapting measures to take better advantage of climate change and global warming is brighter than ever. The communities have been empowered sufficiently by the research study, having built their capacity to demand environmental justice assurance from agencies and people, which hitherto have been degrading the environment in such communities. The mass media are powerful systems which can create a valuable participatory space for developing the knowledge base of individuals to make an informed decision, develop their skills and empower them to ensure a sustainable change.