

**WEATHER AND CLIMATE
INFORMATION SERVICES FOR
EVERYONE RESPONSIBLY
ALGERIA
FORMATIVE RESEARCH**

*RESEARCH & LEARNING
SEPTEMBER 2024*



TABLE OF CONTENTS

BACKGROUND	3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	4
KEY FINDINGS	5
DETAILED FINDINGS	8
TARGET AUDIENCES	8
WEATHER , CLIMATE AND CLIMATE CHANGE	9
WILDFIRES	17
JOURNALISTS'S PERSPECTIVES	27
RECOMMENDATIONS	32

BACKGROUND

This report presents the findings from a formative research study conducted with male and females in the Kabylie region of Algeria between July and August 2024.

This research was conducted to inform project activities under the **WISER** project, funded by the UK Met Office's Weather and Climate Information Services for Africa (WISER) Programme.

Specifically, the study aimed to:

- *Assess how target audiences access and use climate, weather, and wildfire information, and identify the challenges they face;*
- *Determine the target audiences' priorities and needs regarding climate, weather, and wildfire information; And*
- *Identify opportunities and challenges that journalists face in reporting weather, climate, and wildfire information, and determine the support they require.*

Insights from this research will guide capacity strengthening activities of the media partners as well as the production of media programming to address the target audiences' information needs on weather, climate, and wildfires.



Research methodology

Fieldwork consisted of six focus group discussions (FGDs) with adult Algerians located in the Kabylia region, specifically in Tizi Ouzou and Bejaia provinces.

Fieldwork consisted of six focus group discussions (FGDs) with adult Algerians located in the Kabylia region, specifically in Tizi Ouzou and Bejaia provinces. Participants had varying education levels and were based in urban areas (Bejaia and Tizi Ouzou cities), semi-urban (Akbou), and rural areas (Azeffoun and Takhoukht villages).

Participants attending university or holding a university degree are referred to as

highly educated' throughout the report. Those with high school education or below are referred to as 'low education level

Two interviews were conducted with journalists at local radio stations in the Kabylia region.

Limitations of the research

The research faced several limitations, largely due to the sensitivity of the topic of wildfires in Algeria and the timing of the fieldwork:

- A summer heatwave in the region hindered participant recruitment.
- Budget constraints restricted the number of focus group discussions.
- Recruitment challenges in villages led to mixed-gender and mixed- education level groups.
- Journalists were hesitant to discuss wildfires, and unavailable due to workload, especially that fieldwork took place only a few weeks ahead of the presidential elections, which took place on the 7th of September 2024.
-

Given these limitations the study employed convenience participant selection mostly, especially in rural areas, selecting readily available and willing participants to collect data rapidly.

Key findings

Understanding of weather and climate:

- Participants primarily associated weather with daily temperature and conditions.
- Climate was less understood, often confused with weather or linked to climate change.
- Many noted significant changes in climate patterns, including longer and hotter summers and shorter winters.

Impact of climate change:

- Participants reported experiencing longer heatwaves, decreased snowfall, and increased drought.
- Climate change was perceived to affect people's lives, physical and mental health as well as water availability, agricultural yields, and wildlife.

Wildfire awareness and impact:

- Most participants believed there was a link between climate change and wildfires.
- Human activity was widely recognised as the primary cause of wildfires.
- Personal experiences of loss and trauma due to wildfires were reported.

Information sources:

- Internet and weather apps were preferred over Algerian media for weather information.
- Local languages (Amazigh and French) were preferred for accessing weather information.
- Social media emerged as a primary source for real-time wildfire updates and support, powered by ordinary people for their communities.

Media perception:

- Algerian media was largely viewed as unreliable for weather and climate information.
- Criticism of media for reactive rather than proactive reporting on disasters such as wildfires.
- Distrust in official media coverage of wildfires, perceived as selective and embellished.

Information needs:

- Daily weather forecasts, particularly temperature and general conditions, were prioritised.
- Early warning information for extreme weather events and wildfires was highly valued.
- Practical information on how to prepare for extreme weather events such as wildfires and extreme heat was seen as needed.
- Rural communities, including farmers and those living near forests were identified as having the greatest need for wildfire information.

Recommendations:

Findings highlight the need for improved, reliable, and accessible weather and climate information in Algeria, particularly regarding extreme events like wildfires. The following are **examples** of recommendations this report makes to optimise the potential for media to play a crucial role in the audiences' awareness and preparedness – **see full list in the recommendation section** :

- Provide timely early warning communication of extreme weather events including on wildfires.
- Develop educational content on wildfire preparedness with advice that is practical and easy to implement.

- Ensure content is available in multiple languages (Amazigh, French and Arabic/Darija) to cater to different audiences. The language used should be easy to understand by everyone with the scientific terms simplified and explained.
- Enhance partnerships among journalists and experts, local authorities and civil society organisations to facilitate smooth collaboration before and during times of crisis.



Detailed findings

Target audiences

Both highly educated and those with low levels of formal education said the weather primarily indicates when it will be cold or hot. For many, it also indicates other 'states of the sky' such as when it will be windy, stormy, raining or snowing.

Weather, climate and climate change

Participants mostly linked the weather to the temperature in a specific area. They were more unsure about how to define the climate

Participants seemed more unsure when attempting to define the climate. Some argued that it is different from the weather, while others offered a similar definition to the weather, indicating that the climate is about the temperature ('cold or hot'). Others linked it to levels of humidity and dryness. Many automatically linked it to 'climate change and its negative impact on Algeria and the planet as a whole.

Among two urban educated groups, there was a discussion on whether the climate changes or not, with a few of participants indicating that the climate, unlike the weather, does not change.

“ I think that the climate is something broader than the weather. The climate does not change too much, but the weather does change depending on the season and the day ”

Female, highly educated, Bejaia

“ The climate nowadays is changing, here in the north we have a humid climate, in the middle of the country is mixed, in the south in the Sahara they have a dry climate ”

Male, level of education unknown, rural area, Tizi Ouzou

Climate change causes longer summers and shorter winters

This was the most significant change participants said they have witnessed in their lifetime, which they attributed to climate change. Many said that the four seasons almost no longer exist in Algeria, with heatwaves, sometimes lasting for months, becoming the new norm. A few spoke about 2005 as the year when these changes started becoming noticeable.

“ Between 2005 and 2012, the winter was long, and snow reached the sea at low altitudes. Last year 2023 the summer (July) was terribly hot, with 20 days of sirocco, wildfires, and heat waves... Now in 2024, the humidity and heat are unbearable ”

Male, highly educated, rural area, Tizi Ouzou

“ I bought an expensive thick jacket in 2018 that I didn't really use; it's no longer that cold anymore, so yes, there has been changes in the climate for sure ”

Female, highly educated, Tizi Ouzou

According to the participants, extreme heat has been accompanied by other changes such as decreasing snowfall and increasing drought and dryness. A few across groups said the weather has become 'unstable', with the weather changing multiple times on the same day.

Highly educated participants mentioned issues they believe are related/ contribute to climate change such as global warming, pollution, ozone layer, greenhouse gas emissions.

Changes in the weather and climate have deeply affected people's lives and livelihoods

Participants described the following to illustrate how their lives and other people's lives have been affected by the changes in weather and climate:

- Water shortages, especially over the summer during prolonged heatwaves. This triggers the need for water tanks which is costly for most.
- Reduction of yields which cause food prices to increase. In addition, the food does not taste as good as it was in the past.
- Extreme heat is impacting health, with a few participants believing there are more diseases circulating in the summer and other physical issues such as asthma as well as mental health such as stress and extreme anger. Many thought that having to use air conditioning continuously has had an impact on their health.
- Decline in the ability to work and be productive
- Impact on wildlife, for example on wild animals, fish and insects' populations which the participants believed are declining

“ We no longer have running water at home, tap water is provided only twice a week! ”

Male, level of education unknown, rural area, Tizi Ouzou

“ I am 40 years old and I feel that there is a big change since 2005. For example, before 2005 my father used to have tons of honey from his bees not like now, the production of honey has really decreased, the bees are not producing like before. If you have 300 to 400 boxes full of bees and you're producing only 20 KG of honey it means that there is something wrong with nature ”

Male, low education level, semi-urban area, Bejaia

There is a link between climate change and wildfires

Some participants believed climate change causes wildfires. For them, the heat and dry conditions from climate change increase the chance of fires.

“There’s no rain as before, so the soil is dry, and as we’ve told you before, there are open landfills, so dry soil plus sun equals fires

Male, education level unknown, rural area, Tizi Ouzou,

Others thought that wildfires cause climate change.

“There is a link! The wildfires are causing climate change”

Male, highly educated, Bejaia

“I think it causes climate change when wildfires happen, I mean at the exact moment, it becomes hotter after a wildfire”

Male, highly educated, Bejaia



The weather forecast is essential in people's everyday life and work

Most participants said the weather forecast is important to them, especially the information on rain and temperature levels. They need this information to decide on daily activities such as how to dress and to plan outdoor activities and trips.

A farmer and a beekeeper emphasised that the weather forecast is critical for them to plan their daily work, anticipate extreme weather and manage risks.

“Because my work is outside, I need to check the weather. Also for the bees that I'm taking care of I need to have information about the weather because my actions will depend on the weather. It won't be the same if it's hot or no, I will take different actions! So, having information about the weather is a must for me, I'm checking it from an hour to another. This is my job”

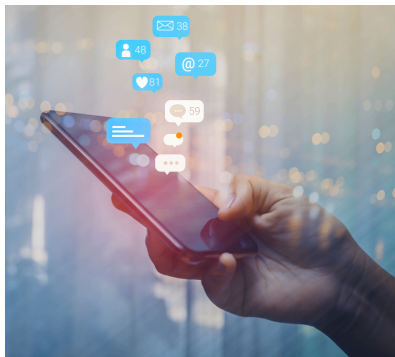
Male, low education level, semi- urban area, Bejaia

“When there's bad weather for fishermen, it also affects farmers. When the coast guards announce bad weather, it usually means rain is coming, which impacts us as well”

Male, education level unknown, rural area, Tizi Ouzou

Participants check the weather forecast on the internet and phone apps

Most participants said they search for the weather information they need online on websites or using the weather app on their phone. They explained that they find it convenient as they have access to the internet and smart phones. They also think that the information on the internet is more reliable than on the Algerian media (see next paragraph).



Only a few participants said they consult radio or TV for weather information. The ones who do mentioned foreign channels such as BFM and TF1. Only one male participant mentioned listening to the Algerian radio as a source of information on the weather and listed Chaîne 2 and Radio Soummam, the local radio station.

Only a few participants said they consult radio or TV for weather information. The ones who do mentioned foreign channels such as BFM and TF1. Only one male participant mentioned listening to the Algerian radio as a source of information on the weather and listed Chaîne 2 and Radio Soummam, the local radio station.

Participants search for weather information in two languages mainly - Amazigh and French. Some use a combination of the two. Arabic/ Algerian Arabic was mentioned only by a few participants across the groups.

French was cited as the main language of search by educated participants, while Amazigh by those in the semi-urban and rural areas of Bejaia and Tizi Ouzou, at times also together with French. Many participants explained however, that the youth in Kabylia do not write or speak the Amazigh language as well as their parents and their grandparents did. This makes consuming news all in Amazigh difficult for them.

“ I don't think that we understand it all if it's a 100% in Amazigh, it's a little bit complicated. ”

Female, highly educated, Tizi Ouzou

“ Grandmothers and old people can understand because they don't understand languages other than Amazigh ”

Female, highly educated, Bejaia

A couple of highly educated participants made a difference in their search language by format. They were mostly comfortable listening to the information in Arabic and reading it in French.



The weather information on Algerian media is generally considered unreliable

Only a few participants thought the weather information on Algerian TV and radio is reliable. Many said they cross check the information online to verify its accuracy.

“ I always check again on Google after hearing the weather forecast on the radio ”

Male, low education level, Tizi Ouzu

“ For me, when it's on [Algerian] TV, I don't find it reliable, only if it is on other media like on Google! ”

Male, highly educated, Bejaia

Most spoke about the difference they see between the forecast and the reality. Some, mostly highly educated participants, indicated that the accuracy of weather predictions is still limited nowadays despite the improvement the science has made, while others blamed it on the Algerian TV and radio, showing low confidence in them as a source of reliable weather forecasts.

“ They [Algerian media] say it will be a sunny day and outside it rains. Sometimes you take your umbrella thinking it will rain but at the end it won't ”

Female, highly educated, Bejaia

“ [I get information from] Google, of course! When I'm in the car and the dashboard says it's 45°C while the radio claims a cool 35°C, so the Algerian media are not 100% trustworthy ”

Male, low education level, Tizi Ouzou

Weather forecasts terminology is difficult to understand

Participants indicated they find the weather terminology in Arabic particularly confusing. This observation was made both by highly educated groups and those with lower education levels.

“ *They are all easy to understand, except for the TV ones, which I don't find very clear. Even though I understand Arabic, they use scientific terms that most people don't understand. That's why I find the information they share a bit complicated* ”

Male, highly educated, Bejaia

Many participants indicated that they prefer to see weather maps instead of listening to weather forecast narratives, which they thought were confusing and unnecessarily lengthy.

“ *The illustration helps people to understand, for example, if you see the sun, you'll understand that it's going to be sunny* ”

Female, highly educated, Bejaia

“ *On the internet in one second you can understand, while on TV you have to wait half an hour for the person to explain* ”

Male, low education level, semi urban, Bejaia

Many participants indicated that they prefer to see weather maps instead of listening to weather forecast narratives, which they thought were confusing and unnecessarily lengthy.

Wildfires

Wildfires affect everyone

Participants described loss of lives and livelihoods because of the wildfires ravaging many areas of Kabylia in the past years.

“ Last year, we had human loss; I had friends that died from it. I also have a friend who has animals and lands that got burnt. It had a catastrophic impact! ”

Male, educated, urban, Bejaia

“ It did affect me so bad! 2 years ago, I planted 380 trees of fruits. I bought them in Boufarik and then planted them. Then, the fire happened and burnt everything, the trees and bees I used to have. The government was supposed to refund the bees, but they gave us bees you cannot raise without trees ”

Male, low education level, semi- urban area, Bejaia

Some participants did not shy away from talking openly about the trauma they and their communities have experienced as a result of the recurring wildfires.

“ I'm traumatised; I'm still shocked; I was saved by my mother ”

Female, highly educated, Tizi Ouzou

“ Our village was one of the first villages that got burnt; everything got burnt, including trees, houses, even people, and nothing left. I hardly escaped the flames ”

Male, level of education unknown, rural area, Tizi Ouzou

Discussions in the groups highlighted the certainty that fires have become the new norm, and the constant fear and expectation that they will occur again soon.

“ You see this beautiful forest! it's beautiful, but when the fire starts, this beauty will represent a big risk for our lives ”

Male, level of education unknown, rural area, Tizi Ouzou

“ We live in psychological turmoil, hoping not to burn out overnight! You can't fall asleep at night, you feel like every night is the night you're going to burn. epresent a big risk for our lives ”

Female, level of education unknown, rural area, Bejaia

Information on wildfires has been critical to communities especially in recent years

Most participants said they have searched information on the causes of the wildfires as well as the damage they have caused in their regions. They have also searched for information on how other countries in the Mediterranean such as Spain and Italy have dealt with the issue.

“Information about wildfires is very important. I need to be aware of the damage and the causes and everything”

Female, level of education unknown, rural area, Bejaia

“We searched the causes! We wanted to know if it was the consequence of heatwaves or someone did it”

Female, level of education unknown, rural area, Tizi Ouzou

Many spoke about the importance of early warning information for the population to ‘raise their awareness’ and encourage them to prepare in advance, therefore reduce the impact of the wildfire, especially those living in rural areas and close to forests.

“We searched the causes! We wanted to know if it was the consequence of heatwaves or someone did it”

Female, level of education unknown, rural area, Tizi Ouzou

Many spoke about the importance of early warning information for the population to ‘raise their awareness’ and encourage them to prepare in advance, therefore reduce the impact of the wildfire, especially those living in rural areas and close to forests.

“We need to know, to raise awareness, because it something that causes victims. So we need to know, to prevent... especially the elderly who lives in villages.”

Male, highly educated, Tizi Ouzou

“The villagers need to prepare their selves and go out of their houses so they won’t get burned”

Female, level of education unknown, rural area, Tizi Ouzou

The national media's coverage of wildfires consistently criticised across groups

Participants thought the national media does not play a role in warning the population in advance, and that all reporting is done in reaction to the fires rather than in anticipation. This was also valid for other disasters such as floods.

“ They don't address the issue unless it happens. They don't raise awareness about it and say be careful about this and that, do this, don't do that, if you see a fire, call this number or this person. They talk about it only when the catastrophe happens ”

Male, highly educated, Tizi Ouzou

“ They understand the consequences of the rain, but they don't warn people about the coming floods for example ”

Male, highly educated, Tizi Ouzou

Low confidence in the trustworthiness of the media coverage, especially official broadcasters dominated the discussions in the groups. They were believed to 'lie' to the population and 'hide the truth'. There was a belief among many that the media coverage on the fires is 'selective', 'embellished' and depicts events on the ground inaccurately.

“ They will say the firemen succeeded in extinguishing the fires, everything went very well, good organisation on the ground ”

Female, highly educated, Bejaia

“ We don't trust them. Even if the information they are saying is true, the fact that we are not used to receiving all the information we need from their side makes it difficult for us to trust them. There is a lack of credibility, we prefer checking on social media ”

Male, low education level, Bejaia

“ The information was manipulated. We weren't told the truth; even the statistics of the number of deaths were false ”

Male, highly educated, Tizi Ouzou

Participants thought the national media does not play a role in warning the population in advance, and that all reporting is done in reaction to the fires rather than in anticipation. This was also valid for other disasters such as floods.

“ *They don't address the issue unless it happens. They don't raise awareness about it and say be careful about this and that, do this, don't do that, if you see a fire, call this number or this person. They talk about it only when the catastrophe happens* ”

Male, highly educated, Tizi Ouzou

“ *They understand the consequences of the rain, but they don't warn people about the coming floods for example* ”

Male, highly educated, Tizi Ouzou

Low confidence in the trustworthiness of the media coverage, especially official broadcasters dominated the discussions in the groups. They were believed to 'lie' to the population and 'hide the truth'. There was a belief among many that the media coverage on the fires is 'selective', 'embellished' and depicts events on the ground inaccurately.

“ *They will say the firemen succeeded in extinguishing the fires, everything went very well, good organisation on the ground* ”

Female, highly educated, Bejaia

“ *We don't trust them. Even if the information they are saying is true, the fact that we are not used to receiving all the information we need from their side makes it difficult for us to trust them. There is a lack of credibility, we prefer checking on social media* ”

Male, low education level, Bejaia

“ *The information was manipulated. We weren't told the truth; even the statistics of the number of deaths were false* ”

Male, highly educated, Tizi Ouzou

Participants also criticised the official media reporting after the wildfires which according to them, does not make public the results of the investigations led by the authorities.

“ You cannot really get an answer to all your questions. For example, You cannot get information about what caused the fire, you won't have a proper report about what happened... It's something they [the media] don't publish ”

Female, highly educated, Bejaia



People rely on social media for timely and credible coverage of the wildfires, highlighting community- driven information sharing

Most participants spoke about social media as their main source of information during the wildfires. They said it allows real-time sharing of the event and experiences by ordinary people, which makes the information more humane, realistic and accurate in their eyes.

“TV is not trustworthy, but if a fire starts here and I go live on social media, I transmit the truth live”

Male, level of education unknown, rural area, Tizi Ouzou

“We get it [information] on time only from people like us. I mean, from people who have pages and public accounts on social media. We don't get it from official pages like “Al Nahar”. They share only positive sides, and they don't share real information”

Female, highly educated, Bejaia

Two social media pages were mentioned across the groups in Bejaia as particularly trusted – Ighrem TV which mainly reports the event and how it is unfolding, and ‘Akbou et ses environs’ which was said to talk to the locals.

For more general information about wildfires, participants said they search on Google as it is easily accessible, and one can search for all information of interest. The elderly, who do not use social media, would ask family and community members or call the radio.

“You can search whatever you want, which you won't just by turning the TV on. It's easier, or we ask a wildfire expert, but we don't know any, so Google is the source”

Male, highly educated, Tizi Ouzou

One exception to the dominance of social media as a source of information about wildfire

observed in one semi-urban group of Bejaia whose members spoke about their local radio station being a good source of information as it shares live information and allows the population to call-in and ask questions.

“Old people don’t have social media so the only way for them to inform people is by calling the radio. I’ve heard it from radio multiple times”

“[Local] Radio is good because they share information live. People call them on live and inform them when there is any wildfire or something happening to not take the roads”

Males, low education level, semi-urban area, Bejaia



Information received through social media facilitated mobilisation to aid affected communities

Participants praised the role social media played in helping communities respond to the wildfires. By connecting people and providing real-time information, social media has enabled quick mobilisation of resources and support to the affected communities.

“ The information shared on social media made people unified ”

Male, level of education unknown, rural, Tizi Ouzou

“ We receive a lot of information. Whatever happens, pages are sharing and spreading the news, we are well informed, we can find everything on social media ”

Female, highly educated, urban, Bejaia

Local authorities and organisations play a role in wildfire preparedness and response

Participants mentioned that local actors sporadically supporting the populations with useful information, such Protection Civile showing children in schools how to prevent wildfires; firemen training people on first aid on treating burns; forest authorities explaining good practices in camping to prevent wildfires; Gendarmerie and Red Crescent conducting awareness campaigns.

Participants said they use posters, flyers, or in person gatherings. Many had only heard of awareness campaigns, not taken part of one. The participants insisted however, that any useful information they have heard on the subject came from ordinary people, through word of mouth or pages on social media.

Civil society organisations have also stepped in since 2021 to offer immediate relief during and after a wildfire, in addition to contributing to local awareness campaigns.



“ The police and firefighters shared information with community associations, which then relay that information to the general public, including both adults and children ”

Male, low education level, Tizi Ouzou

“ For me the best source is unknown people who are volunteering to spread information, they don't even have any official account on social media ”

Male, low education level, semi-urban, Bejaia

Educated participants in Bejaia believed false information about wildfires spread widely

One group of highly educated participants in the city of Bejaia mentioned the spread of false information as an issue fuelled by rapid dissemination during crisis.

“ Sometimes yes [information is relevant] and sometimes no because people share information without checking if it's true or no; then, everyone gets confused and misled ”

“ The same happened regarding the tsunami, pages were sharing that a tsunami is going to happen in Algeria while it's impossible because tsunami happens only in the oceans ”

Males, highly educated, Bejaia

A female participant in the same group explained that she makes informed opinions by reading the comments' section posts on social media platforms.

“ When you go through comments section on social media, you can see different opinions, then you will be able to build up your own opinion and truth about the subject ”

' Female, highly educated, Bejaia

Journalists' perspectives

Findings in this section are presented in bullet points as they were based on two interviews only. They reflect current practices at the journalists' stations.

Current capacity in weather and climate reporting

- Amazigh is used in programming to reach target audiences.
- Weather programmes are produced daily while special programmes are scheduled around specific events or seasons. Environmental and climate-related content is often tied to seasonal events or current issues.
- The journalists mentioned providing weather forecasts, including temperature, climate conditions, and special bulletins for exceptional weather events. They also produce content on environmental protection, sustainable development, and climate change awareness.
- The journalists reported relying on official meteorological sources. They also collaborate with local meteorological offices, universities, and specialists in relevant fields.

Current capacity in weather and climate reporting

- Both journalists mentioned that their media outlets produce regular programmes on wildfires, especially during high-risk seasons, that is from March or April onwards, as the dry season approaches. They indicated that the programming targets a broad audience, with special emphasis on rural communities, farmers, and those living near forests. Both journalists mentioned working with experts, civil protection services, forestry conservation services, and civil society organizations to provide comprehensive information on wildfires.
- The programmes primarily aim to raise awareness around the issue of wildfires and how to prevent them. They cover a range of topics, including prevention measures, importance of environmental protection, real-time updates during wildfire events, damage reports and consequences of wildfires, interviews with experts and authorities.
- The journalists described various formats for wildfire-related content, including live broadcasts; round table discussions with experts, associations, and officials; awareness spots; reports during news programs; dedicated shows lasting up to 52 minutes, and live coverage during actual wildfire events.

Understanding audiences and their needs

- Both journalists indicated that their audience is broad and diverse and include farmers, drivers, schoolchildren and their parents, fishermen, and the general public. One journalist specified that the radio station's listeners are primarily Kabyle-speaking, while the other noted that while the station's programming aim to reach a wide audience, some content may be more targeted towards specific groups like professionals and environmentalists.
- Both journalists believed that daily weather forecasts, particularly temperature and general weather conditions, are a priority for their audience. They noted that listeners often want to know the upcoming weather to plan their activities, especially during extreme weather events like heatwaves or snowfall. One interviewee specified that during summer, there is particular interest in afternoon weather forecasts due to potential storms, and information about heatwaves and high temperatures.
- How they know who their audience is and their priority information - one journalist mentioned that the stations receives phone calls and messages via their Facebook page asking for daily weather information and travel- related weather information, which indicates it is a priority for listeners. The other interviewee did not provide a specific method, but mentioned that they 'observe' their programmes reaching a broad audience and that the general public interest in daily weather forecasts and seasonal concerns such as summer

Challenges producing weather and climate programming

- Language and terminology: both journalists mentioned difficulties in translating complex scientific terms into local languages.
- Understanding scientific data: They struggle with comprehending scientific information, which can lead to inaccuracies in reporting. They also reported that other journalists in their stations struggle with this same issue.
- Keeping up with technology: staying updated with rapidly evolving technology in the field was also noted as a challenge.
- Covering active wildfires: reporting on ongoing wildfires was described as particularly challenging, especially in obtaining real-time footage.
- Lack of specialisation: the journalists noted that they often have to cover various topics, which can limit their ability to develop deep expertise in specific areas such as climate and weather.

Support needed to improve programming

The journalists expressed a need for more specialised training, stronger partnerships with experts, and continuous learning opportunities to improve their ability to produce high-quality weather and climate programming, notably:

- Scientific understanding: both journalists emphasised the need for a stronger scientific foundation to better understand and explain complex climate and weather phenomena.
- Continuous training: ongoing training opportunities were highlighted as crucial for staying up to date with the latest developments in climate science and reporting techniques.
- Technological skills: staying updated with the latest technological advancements in the field was identified as an important area for skill development.
- Language skills: improving the ability to effectively translate and communicate complex scientific concepts in local languages was highlighted as a key area for development.
- Crisis reporting skills: training on how to report during natural disasters was mentioned as a valuable skill to develop.
- Collaboration with experts: both journalists emphasised the need for stronger partnerships with specialists in meteorology, climatology, and related fields.

Recommendations

The recommendations below are based on findings from this study and the participants' descriptions of current information needs and gaps in weather and climate media content in general, and wildfires in particular:

Current capacity in weather and climate reporting

- Create and disseminate timely early warning information about potential wildfires and other extreme weather events. This aligns with the participants' expressed need for proactive/early communication rather than reactive reporting, helping to ensure that communities are promptly alerted to potential wildfire threats.
- Highlight practical advice with actionable information on how to prepare for and respond to extreme weather events, particularly wildfires. Programming could teach audiences simple steps to mitigate the risks of wildfires such as regular land maintenance by removing dead grass, which one of the participants learned is done in other countries through letting donkeys onto the lands.
- Provide timely and accurate reporting of the wildfire as it unfolds, to inform and reassure the populations about how it is evolving.
- Highlight the various organisations contributing to the wildfire response and their roles to enable the populations to connect with them.
- Consider fostering community engagement in content- making by leveraging local figures and actors trusted by audiences, especially those who have a strong presence on social media.
- Develop media content that provides psychosocial support to audiences affected by trauma.

- Develop media content that provides psychosocial support to audiences affected by trauma.
- Develop programming that explains long-term climate trends and their impacts, not just daily weather forecasts, to increase public understanding of climate change.
- Produce and widely advertise awareness programming about environmental protection, particularly focusing on wildfire prevention and response. While journalists confirmed their two stations currently do have such programming, participants in the FGDs did not seem to know it existed.
- Develop media programming that addresses the mis/disinformation spreading during the wildfires.
- Enhance awareness of good practices for user-generated content such as accuracy verification before dissemination. This could involve cross-referencing with official sources or local experts.
- Produce general media content that empowers audiences to critically assess the information they encounter, especially in times of disasters such as wildfires.

On format, technical and other aspects of programming

- Host experts who can share well-informed knowledge and insights and answer audiences' questions. This can help increase the credibility of the media outlet and strengthen audiences' trust it.
- Invite ordinary local people to share their experiences with wildfires, for example those who survived a wildfire, and highlight good preparedness and response practices to inspire others.
- Host government officials and local authorities to allow for a transparent dialogue where community members can voice their concerns and seek clarifications on various policies and decisions.
- Translate complex scientific information about climate change and extreme weather events into easily understandable language.
- Use various local languages - Amazigh, French and Arabic/Darija to ensure wider reach and understanding among diverse audiences.
- Make content tailored to different audience segments, such as elderly, farmers, rural communities, urban dwellers, children, addressing their specific information needs and concerns.
- Encourage audience engagement by enabling them to call- in and send messages to receive information as well as to provide feedback.
- Incorporate more visual aids, such as weather maps and infographics, to make information more accessible and easily understandable.

On training and collaborations

- Foster stronger partnerships between journalists and scientific experts to ensure accurate and reliable information dissemination. This can help address the difficulty journalists face in fully understanding and translating scientific data.
- Foster relationships between the journalists and local organisations and authorities. This is to ensure a smooth cooperation and information sharing during times of crisis.
- Conduct regular training sessions for journalists to improve their understanding of scientific topics, their ability to communicate complex information effectively, as well as their ability to address mis/disinformation – see full list of training request on page 13.
- Establish mechanisms for gathering audience feedback to continuously improve the quality and relevance of climate and weather programming.

This project focuses on improving Weather and Climate Information Services (WCIS) for marginalized communities across Algeria, celebrating the rich cultural and linguistic diversity of the Algerian people, including those from Tamazight-speaking regions.

By addressing these barriers, the project aims to enhance access to climate information and build resilience to climate challenges for all communities.

Colin.Spurway@TN.bbcmediaaction.org

**© BBC Media Action North Africa office Broadcasting House,
Portland Place, London W1A 1AA**

Tel : +44 (0)20 3397 4441