

How has radio programming helped to support Maasai communities in Kenya manage their resources better?

Our evaluative research showed that support to local stations to produce radio programmes enabled Maasai communities to take actions to conserve their resources and share learnings with others.

Project background

The Land for Life project, funded by UK Aid Match from the UK Government and WWF-UK, aims to secure community livelihoods whilst recovering and sustaining wildlife in critical corridors in southern Kenya and northern Tanzania. Building on this project, BBC Media Action partnered with three radio stations- Sidai FM, Maiyan FM and Nosim Radio and supported them to produce programmes to strengthen WWF's community engagement work. The project ran from June 2023 to March 2024.

Research methodology

The research sought to evaluate how the radio programmes produced under the project provided target audiences (local Maasai communities living adjacent to conservancies in Narok and Kajiado counties) with information on sustainable livelihoods, inclusive natural resource management and the benefits of ecosystem (including wildlife) conservation. The study also explored to what extent mentoring and training activities provided by BBC Media Action to partner journalists, improved their knowledge and skills to produce relevant and useful content for the target audiences around natural resource conservation

Data was collected through 12 face-to-face focus group discussions (FGDs) with radio programme listeners from the target audiences (each group consisting of six members) and six in-depth interviews (IDIs). Six IDIs were also conducted with partner journalists and two IDIs with their station managers.

Key insights

- **Listeners liked that the programmes were broadcast in Maasai language and incorporated indigenous knowledge** - showcasing how the Maasai community has been conserving their natural resources, information which they felt was particularly beneficial to the younger generation. They found the programmes relevant, informative and engaging.
- **Hearing this information on the radio made participants take those issues "more seriously."** Most participants mentioned this and also that they were motivated to act because the programmes were not coercing them to do so.
- **Shared learnings** - participants discussed the programme and shared what they had learned with others. For example, they reported telling others not to engage in destructive activities such as bathing or washing clothes near water catchment areas or cut down trees.
- **The radio programmes motivated people to take action** – actions taken included planting trees in their homesteads; partitioning their land to reduce land degradation; planting grass and introducing controlled grazing. There was also mention by those who lived near wildlife corridors, that they no longer fully fenced off their land to allow wild animals, particularly elephants, to pass through with ease.

“When we attend the chief’s barazas they tell us not to cut down trees for charcoal and warn us that we will be arrested and heavily punished for doing so....people obey out of fear of...However, when they are sure they have evaded the authorities, they will cut down the trees because they do not have enough understanding...

That is why I loved the radio programme at Sidai FM because it was educating us on the benefits of trees and how cutting them means we will not get enough rainfall” Male listener, Sidai FM, Narosura

- **Journalists who received our training felt they now had a better understanding of natural resource conservation issues.** They said findings shared by researchers helped them to better understand their target audiences and their information needs around natural resource conservation.
- **They now understood better how to obtain audience feedback,** organize and moderate FGDs, which can be used to help them improve the quality of their programmes.
- **Station managers said being part of the project had contributed to their overall audience growth and visibility.** They felt the stations had benefitted through the equipment and training they received. They said these radio programmes had higher listenership because of the relevance of the topics and coverage of different locations.

Key implications

- It was evident from this study that the project has contributed to improving target audiences’ knowledge around sustainable livelihoods, inclusive natural resource management and the benefits of ecosystem (including wildlife) conservation.
- However, some knowledge gaps still exist, for example, around tree planting and

management. Participants also lacked sufficient knowledge on how to report and follow-up on compensation from the government for human-wildlife conflict cases.

- Land in some study locations was still communally-owned as opposed to much of the rest of the country where the government’s land sub-division initiative has now been rolled out. Communally owned land was cited as a key barrier as participants said they felt demotivated to create paddocks or plant trees in land that did not fully belong to them. Future programmes could take a closer look at community-led areas that still exist and flourish, such as Loita Forest, to share their practices and stories of how it can succeed.
- Cultural barriers around sustainable livestock management practices also persist, for example; having a big herd of livestock comes with high status in the community and is culturally significant. Future programming needs to address these issues.
- Findings show that the training and mentoring received by journalists has improved their knowledge and skills to produce relevant and useful content around natural resource conservation.
- However, some felt that the project was too short to fully grasp some of the production and technical skills, something that a future project could focus on.
- Journalists would like more time speaking to experts as they experienced difficulties securing interviews with them. Future projects could support by linking them with experts in the field to enable better working relationships.

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