



**COMMUNITY RADIO GUIDE
FOR PRODUCING
PROGRAMS
ON
BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION
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INTRODUCTION

Journalists are generally quite uncomfortable with environmental reporting, specifically the forest ecosystem (the forest cover and the animals living underneath). The forest ecosystem is a scientific domain with its own language and concepts. Many reporters are not scientists and are not trained in scientific reporting. They are not familiar with scientific language and concepts they are called upon to use in constructing news stories and producing programs for radio. Information on the environment in general and on biodiversity specifically is complex, complicated and thus difficult to explain and to breakdown into easy-to-understand broadcast language and style. This makes it really difficult for journalists to provide background information, context, and clarification in a news story and program. This explains why, reporters in this domain have often been accused of distortion of facts, misinterpretation of issues, and misinformation of the listeners. Critics hold that, our inability to report biodiversity correctly can produce much confusion at the level of the individual, community, and other stakeholders. Such confusion can negatively impact the decisions, policies and actions by stakeholders in matters pertaining to biodiversity conservation

The question for us journalists then is: what methods can we use to construct news reports and produce programs on the natural environment such that, our listeners can better understand the information and messages we want to transmit? Can we use the same conventional methods we use every day? Can we respect the norms of conventional journalism and report the environment effectively?

These questions are relevant and need urgent answers in the context of South West Cameroon where the potential threats to its rich biodiversity is coming under serious threats from the coming of a 400 km international high way across tropical rain forest ecosystem. There is urgent need to not only to inform our listeners, but also to educate and persuade all stakeholders in biodiversity conservation in the region that "something has to be done, and be done fast" to pre-empt acceleration in the overharvesting of non-timber forests products when that road the Kumba-Mamfe, Bamenda-Mamfe-Ekok-Nigeria opens to international traffic in the months ahead.

This is why, we have developed a few tools for you operating in the region to report and produce programs on biodiversity conservation issues in a way that, our listeners can easily understand the information and the messages contained therein. If you master those tools, you will certainly make a difference which could become a reference in reporting biodiversity conservation in your region.

So, use it well.

Good luck

Shifu Ngalla

Yaoundé

12/10/2015

Chapter One

The Strengths of Community Radio in Biodiversity Conservation

Learning goal

At the end of this chapter, we should be conscious of the unique qualities of community radio as an instrument for the promotion of biodiversity conservation, and understand why we have to use it with confidence to achieve this objective.

1.0 Unique qualities of community radio

Community radio broadcasting has often been considered as the preferred instrument of providing information and education in rural communities. It is particularly effective in communication for change of attitude, and behavior among people. The community radio is considered to be so effective because:

- It is in the community, about the community, owned and controlled by the community, for the community
- Instrument of proximity broadcasting as it functions in a way that reflects community needs and interests
- Reaches a wide audience across villages
- Accessible to the literate and illiterate alike
- Low-cost and low –tech and easy to run
- Readily affordable (on mobile phones)
- Permits individual as well as group listening in rural communities
- Well adapted to the Cameroonian oral culture
- Provides interactive two-way/participatory communication
- Use of native language for grassroots communication and smooth information flows
- Easily overcomes culture-derived barriers in communication
- Enhances communal spirit or sense of collective belonging and common purpose for collective good

- Strong tool for inducing community participation in, and appropriation of project implementation.
- Communication interface between development agencies,

1.1 Generator of belief and trust among listeners

- The strongest function of community radio as instrument for reporting and producing programs intended for change of attitudes and practices is that:
 - It generates confidence and trust among the listeners because the journalists are known and trusted people in the community
 - Listeners easily identify with them through language and culture.
 - When listeners believe and trust in the journalist, they can readily believe in the contents of the information and message contained in reports and programs.
 - Belief in content is first step towards change – positive change of attitude, practice and behaviour for the benefit of biodiversity conservation.

Chapter Two

Reporting the Flora World

Learning goal

At the end of this module, we should be able to understand the basic difference between news as we know it today, and what environment news is really about. We will also understand what material we can get from the forest to construct news stories and build educative programs.

2.0 News as we know it today

Environmental reporting is no easy thing to do for a vast majority of journalists the world over. By reporting, we understand in our context to mean, gathering information, processing it either for a news report, or using the processed information to produce a program, (magazine, documentary, participatory or phone-ins etc) Whenever environmental reporting is mentioned, one of the big questions that readily comes up is: what is the object or subject of reporting? Put simply, what do we report about in environmental reporting? What are the issues we report about? And where and how do we obtain the material about which to report?

If we are asking these questions, it is because environmental reporting is quite unfamiliar when compared with what we report about every hour of every day of our professional lives as journalists. What we all know is what Harold Evans, one time editor of the *Times* newspaper, (UK), clearly indicates: "News is people". Others even say that, news is what people say about an event, and not the event itself. That's why today, news as we know it generally revolves and evolves not very much around trees and animals, but around people. News as we know today is generally about:

2.1 Power elite/institutions/organizations

- Individual personalities: Nelson Mandela, Barack Obama etc. at the world stage
- Institutions/Organizations: World Bank, International Monetary Fund, (IMF)
- Nations: USA, Germany, Russia, France, Britain, Nigeria etc

2.2 Celebrity and entertainment

- Sports
- Music
- Sex

2.3 Surprises

- Rescues
- Personal triumphs
- Tragedy
- Accidents
- The uncommon, (wife beats up husband, women delivers four babies)

If the foregoing is what news is about, or are issues which generate news, what then is environmental news about? What material can we pick from the forest ecosystem to produce programs for radio?

2.4 The flora world/vegetation

The vegetation is the core component of the forest world without which other components like the animal world cannot exist. The trees and all that grow under them as well as the human activities that take place there generate material or information for the reporter.

2.4.1 Areas of interest in forest mass for the reporter

- Types of animals and plant species available
- The cultural resources traditional knowledge systems of the local people

- Uses by local communities of the plants and animal resources available
- How the available animal and plant resources are being managed
- Activities going in the forest,(agriculture, logging, mining, construction of infrastructure)
- Projects on-going or earmarked

2.5 Deforestation

- Greatest threat to the forest
- Caused by activities like plantation agriculture, informal and industrial logging, informal and industrial mining, shifting cultivation and construction of road infrastructure, (roads, dams)

2.5.1 Area of interest for the reporter

- The impacts and consequences of logging on biodiversity, (animal, forest undergrowth, water)
- Wood species logged
- Governance issues: respect or violations of Forestry and Wildlife Law of 1994 by logging companies
- The scale and the degree of destruction of the vegetation resulting from the construction of infrastructure,
- The scale and the degree of destruction of the forest cover through farming and extractive industries mining etc.
- Role of local government and council officials
- Role of non-governmental and civil society organizations

2.6 Non-timber forest products (NTFPs)

- A vast majority of forest dwellers depend directly on forest resources for their livelihoods.
- The non-timber resources of the forest provide food in the form of fruits, leaves, tubers, wild animals, honey, and water.
- Some of them are eru, bush mango, bush pepper, bitter kola etc.

- The people also obtain medicines from the forest plants for their health needs
- Some are commercialized on the local markets or exported.

2.6.1 Area of interest for the reporter

- How abundant or scarce the non-timber products are in a given site for a given community
- Commercial activities around non-timber forest products, (the commercial value chain, actors and circuits etc)
- What the locals themselves or researchers are doing to domesticate some of the depleting non-timber products
- What indigenous techniques and technologies the locals use to transform/process and conserve some of the products.
- Research activities currently going on in the region on non-timber forest resources
- Bio-piracy in the region: genetic material stolen from the forests of the region on a substantial scale, (statistics on bio-piracy difficult to come by).
- Traditional knowledge and practice in the processing of resources into pharmaceutical products for medical care.

2.7 Culture

- An interesting aspect of non-timber resources of the forest
- Conservation initiatives, including reporting for community radio must consider the role of the native cultures of native communities which are more and more at the fore front of discussions within the conservation community
- “In many cases community interaction with the environment generates a sort of symbiosis which some refer to as “bio-cultural units” or cultural landscape.” (Phillips et al 2004: 23)
- True to fact, people shape “their lifestyles and livelihood strategies to respond to the opportunities and challenges presented to them by their surrounding land and resources.” (Phillips et al 2004: 23)

- This clearly means that, the socio-cultural practices and the religious and philosophical belief systems of traditional communities are very much linked to the ecological system in which they are found.

2.8 Area of interest for the reporter

- The disruptions of the socio-cultural lives of local people when the natural environment, (forest cover, water, animals etc) in which they are found is threatened or damaged
- Impacts on cultural heritage on such disruptions , (shrines, sacred trees and animals, medi-plants etc)
- Disruptions in the form of the exclusion of local people from management of natural resources and effects on the socio-cultural identities of forest dwellers, (like the Baka/Pygmies of Cameroon)
- Custodians of “ecological knowledge” (elderly persons and heads of village regulatory societies), in the community
- Eco-driven cultural practices

Chapter Three

Reporting the Animal World

Learning goal

At the end of this module, we should be able to understand what material we can get from wildlife/animals to construct news stories or build educative programs.

3.1 The animal world

The animal world in the forest ecosystem is very dynamic and can provide material for exciting stories.

Area of interest for the reporter

- Existing species
- Endemic species available
- Protected species available
- Conservation mechanism/structures available
- Strengths and weaknesses of conservation structures
- Conservation actors in the area
- Law enforcement activities in the locality
- Animal-man relationship in the cultures of the local people
- Indigenous knowledge of wildlife

In the South West Region, some of human-driven activities like poaching, deforestation, protected areas, community forests and cultures of the forest people are particularly interesting for reporters.

3.2 Poaching

It is:

- Killing animals that are protected by law without prior special legal authorization.
- Mass killing of animals that are not protected by law for commercial purposes
- Not killing species of animals authorized by law for consumption, (e.g. rodents like porcupine and cane rats can be hunted for food. But, it becomes poaching and thus illegal when these animals are killed on a massive scale for sale.
- Capturing wildlife species live and keeping or commercializing them illegally.
- Capturing baby primates like baboons, chimps, monkeys and birds is a common practice.
- A growing market for live animal species especially birds and exotics like rare chameleons, is found in the USA and Europe.

3.2.1 Poaching value chain

Killing wild animals for these reasons involves a long chain of activities and actors.

3.2.2 The activity

- Wild animals are hunted for meat which is either smoked or not and transported clandestinely to urban cities and exotic restaurants abroad.
- Wild animals are hunted and killed for their parts (ivory, skins, etc.) which are extracted and sold in or out of the country through intricate mafia networks

The actors include:

- The local people in villages as hunter or accomplice
- The people from the city or town with sophisticated fire arms who sneak into the forest and kill with our without the complicity of someone in the village,
- Timber truck pilot, bus or motor bike driver, who takes the booty dead or alive to the city for sale and consumption in high-up restaurants, or for export.

3.2.3 Area of interest for reporters/Reporting values

- The existence of laws and other regulatory instruments in the sector and the strengths and weaknesses of such laws and regulations,
- Law enforcement and law violation are evident areas for exciting stories and programs.
- Poaching is about crime, and reporting crime is usually exciting as there is quite a great deal of human drama in it

The specific areas of interest for the reporter include causes of poaching:

- **Deforestation** through logging, large scale plantation farming, opening of new road infrastructure, industrial mining which create routes into hitherto inaccessible animal sanctuaries for poachers, and ease transportation of the booty to cities and eventually out of the country.
- **Generalized and deepening poverty** very much responsible for the alarming increase in the bush meat trade with all the devastating consequences this has on biodiversity.
- **Source of big and cheap money** made from animal parts like ivory from elephants, skins of leopards, and from live or dead gorillas, chimpanzees
- **Mafia networks** in which corrupt officials of the local and central government and law enforcement are sometimes dangerously active.
- Wildlife trafficking and how poaching is affecting or undermining conservation achievements, economic prospects and local development
- **Institutional weaknesses**, that is, the law and legal frame works in the sector are either weak or are hardly enforced. Some government officials and law enforcement agents are corrupt and are thus active accomplices in wildlife trade.

3.3. Protected areas

- Defined as “An area of land and /or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biodiversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and managed through legal or other means” IUCN (Phillips, 2004: 1)

3.3.1 Area of interest for the reporter

- **Situation of the park:** number of protected areas in a particular area,
- How well protected the protected areas are in terms of the strength of number of park wardens, resources deployed for their equipment and that of the areas as a whole
- **The level of motivation** of the park wardens: generally grossly inadequate in numbers, poorly trained and paid.
- **Physical and working conditions**, and performance capacities of game warden: aging and demoralized, generally no match to highly motivated and heavily armed poachers
- **Government’s real commitment** manifested in the investments made or not made in protected areas
- **Governance issues:** level of corruption, active and direct or indirect agents in poaching wildlife in the parks they are called upon to protect

3.4 Rights of native or indigenous people in the protected area system

- Focus here is on issues of equity and the rights of indigenous/native people of the area where the protected area is, or who live in the neighborhood
- Sometimes, the indigenous people are evicted from their ancestral lands for protected areas to be created.
- Access to some resources may either be restricted or banned for them. They are in this way deprived of the resources on which they depend for their livelihood.
- They also suffer a non-tangible loss which is that of being disconnected from their ancestors remained behind in their villages of origin.
- They may not be compensated for these losses

3.4.1 Area of interest for the Reporter

- Reporter is called upon to find out whether conservation through the protected area approach is harming or helping the environment itself and the local people.
- The rights and obligations of the law of the native/indigenous people
- Governance issues: It is important for the reporter to find out whether the native people:
 - are given their own due from the dividends of protected areas such as revenue derived from ecotourism,
 - have been compensated for any tangible and intangible losses or damages they may have incurred as a result of the presence of a protected area.

3.5 Eco-tourism

It is “tourism that conserves the natural environment and wellbeing of the people through responsible travel,” ((The Courier, 1999: 53”)

- Emphasis in the definition is on the conservation of the environment and benefits to the local people
- Main setting or where ecotourism takes place is the natural environment
- The natural setting constitutes the all-important element in ecotourism as it counts very much on scenic beauty and abundance of wildlife.
- Tourists today want to replace the traditional tourism which tended to put emphasis on the “3 Ss” that is, “Sun, Sea, and Sand.” Formerly, it was fashionable for romantically-inclined tourists to go in for sun-set and sun-rise trips on sandy beaches. Some call it beach or sea side tourism.
- Today, the preference is for the “4Es” meaning, “Entertainment, Exotic, Excitement, and Education.” Focused destinations here are to natural environments and to local people away from the sea.
- It is a form of tourism that banks very much on unique landscapes, abundant wildlife and rich cultural heritage.

3.5.1 Area of interest for reporter

- Benefits to local communities in terms of financial fall-outs and projection of image of locality at national and world levels
- Attention from government in terms of re-enforcement of conservation of biodiversity resources in the locality
- Investments by local biz men and women in the sector
- The environmental awareness and education which the presence of tourists generate among local communities
- Activities of non-governmental organizations in or around the tourism destination sight

3.6 Community Forests

- It is chunk of forest allocated by law to a community, managed by the community, and the resources therein exploited for the benefits of all members of the community.
- It is managed by a committee whose members represent all the sociological segments or ethnic groups in the locality

3.6.1 Area of interest for the reporter

- The situation of the community forest: size, resources available, (timber, non-timber including cultural intangibles such shrines, and sacred resources etc)
- Potential benefits for the community
- Benefits already reaped
- Functioning of the management committee
- Respect or violations of internal law and internal rules of the management committee, (conflicts or harmony)
- Governance issues, (transparency, accountability) in the distribution of benefits
- Role of elite and local authorities in the management of the community forest, (interference or promotion)

3.7 Forests royalties

Financial resource- redistributed as a share of Annual Forest Royalties (AFF) to villages/communities, adjacent to areas where logging companies are operating

- The distribution is as follows: 50% is destined for local councils and 10% goes to the forest-adjacent communities.
- In addition, logging companies within the framework of their corporate social responsibilities are expected to carry out small-scale projects – building schools and roads – for rural communities where they are exploiting timber resources.
- The practice is in force since 1996, as a decentralized mechanism for forest income management and is aimed at increasing the standards of living of forest-dependent village communities

3.7.1 Area of interest for the reporter

- Governance issues: corruption,
- Money actually gets to the beneficiaries?
- Free flow of information about royalties?
- Access to local communities about royalties?
- Money actually used for village projects earmarked for the benefit of all?
- Role of elite local government and council officials, positive or negative?

3.8 Indigenous knowledge and cultural resources

- Known variously as “indigenous knowledge”, “traditional knowledge”, “local knowledge” “traditional ecological knowledge”
- It is inbuilt in the community’s practices, institutions, relationships and rituals unique to a culture and society
- It is made up local people’s knowledge and belief about the natural world, their ecological concepts and their natural resource management institutions and practices
- It is based on ancestral knowledge and interaction with habitats, and species
- They obtain it from their natural environment

- Only a few people hold the information and knowledge about specific plants
- Knowledge is handed down from generation to generation as a family secret
- It is a “no-patented” informal knowledge, but recognized by the community
- The use of the knowledge is beneficial both to himself/herself and to the community

Chapter Four

Constraints to Environmental Reporting

Learning goal

At the end of this chapter, we should be able to identify hurdles to environmental reporting and how we can overcome them.

4.0 Constraints

The constraints or difficulties we face in environmental reporting could be classified into two broad categories namely; constraints which result from the nature of environmental news itself, that is, in built constraints, and constraints outside the nature of the environmental beat.

4.1 In-built constraints include:

- The highly scientific and technical language which are very difficult to breakdown into easy-to-day broadcast language and style
- Concepts of biodiversity and biodiversity conservation are complex and difficult to understand.

4.2 External constraints

We have constraints that are outside the nature of environmental beat. These include:

- Lack of training and thus incapacity to breakdown the language of biodiversity and biodiversity conservation,
- Absence of model reporters in the country,
- Lack of or insufficient resources both material and financial etc.

Given this multitude of challenges, what can we do to overcome them?

4.3 Overcoming constraints in Environmental Reporting

We can overcome hurdles to reporting environmental issues by adopting some general principles and practices as reporters, mastering the use of some technical tools, and adopting a new type of journalism brand that fits with environmental reporting. But, first we need to be willing and prepare ourselves to be environmental reporters. To be a good environmental reporter, one has therefore to:

4.3.1 Build a positive profile as a reporter by being:

- Passionate about nature
- Concerned with matters of public interest
- Be ready and humble to learn
- Courageous: be able to overcome fear in case of threats and assaults
- To be persistent: consistently follow up an issue till the end
- Curious:
 - do not take things for granted,
 - always ask yourself questions and seek for answers,
 - explain complexities,
 - go beneath the surface

4.3.2 Adopt knowledge-building practices

- Read a lot of books and newspaper articles on environmental issues
- Source from the Internet
- Listen to programs on the environment on world renowned radio stations
- Watch documentaries on the environment
- Discuss forest resource issues with elderly persons in the village
- Do not neglect indigenous knowledge
- Do not claim you know environmental issues more than anybody else in the village for you may be literate, but you cannot be all-knowing
- Share your knowledge and experiences with others

After building this personal profile, it is important now to acquire the necessary professional techniques.

4.3.3 Choose an appropriate brand of journalism practice

To report the environmental beat effectively, we need to choose the appropriate journalism practice from the several genres that exist. Each brand is appropriate for reporting in a specific domain. Some of the brands are *investigative journalism*, *sports journalism*, *citizen journalism*, *development journalism*, *civic journalism*, *new journalism* also known as *literary journalism*. These brands of journalism have come about as a result of the fact that, conventional journalism has some technical and normative limitations to enable journalists cover certain domains effectively. This is the case with the environmental domain. It becomes necessary to choose the appropriate brand that best suits for environmental reporting.

4.3.4 New journalism/literary journalism: what it is

Of the brands that exist, **new journalism** or **literary journalism** best fits the environmental beat. **It was** launched by Tom Wolfe, Hunter S. Thomson and Gay Talese in the 1960s as brand of journalism

4.3.4.1 Characteristics

- “It uses fiction devices to write about non-fiction events and issues such as environment”, (Mataba, 2011)
- It is journalism which **allows for the opinion, ideas and involvement of the reporter**, contrary to the conventional journalistic requirement of objectivity or neutrality.
- It is also extensive journalism as it is **not restricted to who, what, how and why**
- It is **scene-setting** and **dramatic** as it entertains and engages and hooks the audience
- **It is descriptive, as it does not only tell, it shows.**

- It is **very detailed** and uses “concrete, specific, and vivid nouns and lively verbs in reporting an event or issue, (Mataba, 2011)

Given its flexible nature, we can quite comfortably design linguistic tools and style to report issues in the domain of biodiversity conservation. It gives us the license to design linguistic devices to simplify scientific jargon, involve listeners emotionally or load emotions unto our stories, and bring non-human issues to the center of the interests of our listeners. This one of the effective ways to report for educative purposes, report with the intention of influencing our listeners to positively change their attitudes and practices as regards natural forest resources in their communities. We therefore have the options to construct linguistic tools to handle practical difficulties in environmental reporti

4.3.5 Use linguistic devices to breakdown scientific and technical jargon

When faced with the problem of simplifying technical or scientific jargon we can use the following linguistic tools as the case may be:

4.3.5.1 Classify: We arrange ideas in a way that can make the listener understand the difference between things that are found in the same group or family, say an animal family.

Example: A man was arrested in Ekondo-Titi this morning for killing a predominantly black and white animal of the monkey family with a long bushy hair. The body of the animal was lifted from a big plastic bag on the carriage of his car. The game guard who intercepted the vehicle called it a drill, and said, it belongs to the class of animals that are totally protected by law. If convicted, the man could be sentenced up to three years imprisonment with hard labor.

4.3.5.2 Describe: “To describe is to picture in words”, that is, provide clear and vivid mental impressions. By describing you get listeners to see with eyes and hear with the ears of their minds how something is like.

To describe effectively, we need to:

4.3.5.3 State size, quantity

Example 1: *The mighty elephant stood at close range staring at us with its left ear as large as the size of a mat.*

4.3.5.4 Indicate shape: State length, width, height, circumferences etc.

Example 2: *The giraffe stood taller than a ladder to the roof of a house.*

The trunk of the giant forest tree was so big that, ten adult men arms stretched could not embrace it round

4.3.5.5 State weight: Relate figures and numbers to audience's own experience because generally, people find it difficult to visualize figures.

Example 3: Instead of: *The elephant bull killed by the poachers weighed 2 tons”*

Better as: “The poacher pointed his gun straight at the head of the elephant bull. In a blast, he released a shower of bullets. The bull crumbled to the ground. Ten hefty men mustered all their energies but could not turn it over for butchering”

4.3.5.6 Bring out color: quickly calls up vivid mental pictures

Example: *A man was arrested in Ekondo-Titi this morning for killing a predominantly black and white animal of the monkey family with a long bushy hair. A game guard called it a drill.*

Just stating that, a man was arrested for killing a drill is not clear enough for the listeners cannot visualize it. We have to describe it using colors to “show” the listeners what the drill is, and not only tell the listeners what it is.

4.3.5.7 Explain: To explain is to analyze, and to analyze is breaking up the whole into parts. This makes it possible for listeners to understand the whole from its part, and its parts from the whole. The whole “biodiversity”, could be explained by breaking it down to its parts in a news for easier understanding by the listeners in a news story as follows

Example: *A meeting on forest biodiversity a management opened in Tombel today.*

Better as: *A meeting on how to manage resources like timber, bush mango, eru, bitter kola and wild pepper, as well as animals of our forests, opened in Tombel this morning*

4.3.5.8 Connect the known to the unknown

When the audience has a limited knowledge or experience of a subject, connect the new subject to something they already know about.

Example 1: *connecting a buffalo to a cow, a partridge to a fowl, pig to bush pig, a mango to a bush mango*

4.3.5.9 Make use of experts and actors operating in the locality through interviews

The cheapest way journalists go round the problem of simplifying scientific language is to interview a scientist/specialist in issues of biodiversity. Others take them on as resource persons on their programs. This may be the correct thing to do, but, we should keep in mind that, most scientists are not communicators. The scientists themselves may not be able to break down their own jargon to the understanding of the listeners. They could in the course of interview be going from one jargon to the other. It is important then, to prepare the interview very well in advance and explain to the scientist to be as simple and clear as possible. You can use the hints above to guide the resource person to be simple and clear in her/his responses.

Chapter Five

Emotional Loading

Learning goal

At the end of this chapter, we should be able to produce programs and write news stories in such a way as to bridge the emotional and psychological gap between listeners and news stories and programs on biodiversity.

5.0 The emotional and psychological gaps

Experience indicates that, there is often an emotional and psychological gap between the listeners and environmental news. Quite often, listeners are hardly touched emotionally and psychologically by issues that relate to plants and animals.

Example 1: *Thirty five people have perished in a motor accident in the Congolese city of Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The accident occurred when a city bus at top speed under a heavy down pour of rain crashed into a standing lorry. Thirty five people died on the spot while over twenty others sustained serious wounds. The victims were rushed to the University Teaching Hospital in Kinshasa.*

Example 2: *Thirty five elephants have been poisoned to death in the Korup National Park in Ndian Division of the South West region of Cameroon. It is suspected that, the poisoning was carried out by poachers in order to harvest the ivory for sale on the black market. It will be recalled that, the elephant is a totally protected species, and if the poachers are caught they will jailed.*

Listeners will readily feel and be affected more by the story on the accident in faraway Kinshasa, because they more easily identify, empathize and sympathize with fellow human beings. It is normal. But, this constitutes a big problem for us, environmental reporters in our role as educators because, we need to use our reports and programs to get our target audiences change destructive attitudes, practices and behavior in the way they manage and use biodiversity resources. The listeners need not only to understand, but more to feel and be affected by the information and messages contained in news reports and messages in our educative programs. Feeling

and being affected deep in us by a specific issue is the start of change. Working to achieve change of attitudes and practices among the local people is a fundamental objective of our job. How then can we report in a manner as to engage our listeners emotionally and psychologically?

5.1 Humanize environmental reporting on wildlife/animals

Humanizing environmental news items is a technique that casts non-human items from a human perspective and brings non-human issues to the center of human concerns/interests. The technique consists of giving human attributes to non-human life forms, that is, for example, to perceive birds and animals as if they possessed human qualities and given the same importance, (personification). The stylistic device of giving human qualities to non-humans is meant to move us emotionally and psychologically closer to the condition or situation of the animals. Such emotional involvement of the listeners in the story is intended to build change-inducing awareness and action-instigating impact on the listeners concerning wildlife or animals.

In the story below, note the careful use of **personal and possessive pronouns** (he/she/her/his) for animals to stress intimacy, and to get listeners feel and develop love for wildlife, as well as the use of affective words like, *mom, little baby boy, her palm, her face, breakfast etc.* **This is emotional loading.** The technique arouses emotions of the listeners without distorting the facts.

Example: *In the gaiety of an upcoming day, Tati the mother gorilla and her six-month baby pranced to a forest opening and settled on a huge dead log. The baby began tugging at her mother's bulged breasts enjoying a profuse flow for breakfast, while her mother picked fleas from her baby boy's sprouting hair. It was at that specific moment that, Pierre Ondola, the poacher who had camped nearby all night long, raised his gun, finger on the trigger and let go the blast. He lodged two bullets in Tati's lungs. She thudded backwards, with blood jetting from her chest. Spared, her little baby boy scampered into the thickets of the forest underneath, his small heart pounding. Ondola the poacher, rushed to his booty, and grapped Tati by the palm. It was still warm. To "finish up with her" he booted her on the right jaw. Her face wrinkled in agony.*

Ondola looked steadily into her eyes and shrieked, for they strangely looked like those of her older sister who died in his arms in their village health centre three months back. Like his sister, Tati the mother gorilla stretched herself, wriggled twice, and emitted a long coarse breath. It was her last. Now left alone in the forest underneath, the little gorilla baby boy who survived the attack on his mother will never his mom again.

5.2 Humanize environmental reporting on flora/plant-connected stories

It is much easier to use the technique of emotional loading when we have to construct animal-connected stories. After all, we identify with animals quicker than with plants. Animals, especially mammals, are closer to humans than plants. How then can we humanize plant-connected stories to get our listeners affected emotionally, or awaken their consciousness and push them into action that can contribute to biodiversity conservation? Several techniques exist to do so, but let's examine a few.

5.2.1 Use collective pronouns

We can regularly use collective pronouns like “we”, “our” and possessives like “ours” to build community pride, sense of collective ownership of resources, and to emphasize collective responsibility in their management and protection

Example: *A forest resource expert has predicted that, we will not have any more eru and bush mango to harvest from our forests in the next few years. The prediction was made by Mr. Mpella Masso Moloki, local head of the Forestry department in Ekondo Titi at the end of a two day training seminar for local journalists. He disclosed that, food stuff traders have begun trooping in from the cities and are buying huge quantities of our eru to sell in Buea, Limbe Douala, and to export some to neighboring Nigeria. Mr. Moloki explained that, the influx of traders to the villages in search of eru to buy is a direct consequence of the opening of the newly constructed Kumba-Mamfe-Ekok –Nigeria highway to traffic. The road now provides ease of access to eru stocks in the forests and provides easier and cheaper transportation to markets both in Cameroon and Nigeria. He warned that, the situation is seriously disturbing as this is going to cause a significant drop in stocks of eru in our forests. In the end, he*

concluded, we_will have no more eru to eat as we have always done from the time of our ancestors.

5.2.2 Use agenda setting technique

This the practice of prioritizing news items in a news cast or in an editorial policy. We give some news items prominence in coverage because we may want to shape or influence public opinion in a particular way, create awareness, raise debate or discussion on the issue were are reporting about. This technique is also intended to induce listeners to think in a given way about the issues we prioritize in our programs. We can equally use it in environmental reporting: To do so, we should:

- Give priority to environmental issues on our news menu
- Let environmental news enjoy prominent and sustained coverage as a matter of editorial policy
- Repeat the environmental beat on news bulletins over and over again.

Examples: The governor of the South West Region chairs a meeting of administrative and technical services. They come out with strong and binding decisions on a wide variety of issues including the management and use of non-timber forest resources of the region. You can use agenda setting technique to structure your news bulletins as follows:

Day 1: *Select the decisions taken about the use of non-timber forest resources and give them priority as headline news item for the morning, afternoon, and evening news bulletins.*

Day 2: *Choose a different aspect of the same area of your interest which is still the management and use of non-timber resources and build another story for the morning, afternoon and evening. This time you can build your story on what was specifically said about eru given its importance as food item in the SWR.*

Week-end news round-off: *Produce a dossier or magazine with resource persons including those who possess indigenous knowledge and other stakeholders including local people*

5.2.3 Use framing/angling/slanting technique

Framing, angling or slanting refers to the practice in which we select a specific aspect of an event or issue and make it the main idea that organizes the story we are narrating. In this way, we are promoting that specific issue we have selected. As journalists, we can decide to put emphasis on a particular issue, interpret an issue in the way we want, marginalize or neglect all or parts of an issue. In this way, we can influence listeners by tilting their attention to that specific aspect of the issue. We use this this technique to influence our listeners given that, generally, people listen to our news reports and programs, not only to get the information, but also so that, we should interpret the information and messages for them to understand better. This is why it is important that we should always frame/angle/slant our stories in a manner that discourages, condemns, and denounces any negative acts and actions against biodiversity conservation.

Example: *Two women early this morning violated the injunction of our Chief by leading a group of 8 buyam-sellem women from Douala into the forest to harvest the last the reserves of our eru. The 8 women with their two accomplices – Mrs Erica Mboke, and Mrs Linda Daila of the Mle 4 quarters sneaked into the forest at 4 O'clock this morning and began harvesting our eru. They were caught in the act by 3 who were going to their farms. They rushed back to the village and reported the matter to the Chief. The Chief immediately ordered for their arrest. They were arrested and brought to the palace.*

It will be recalled that, last month, the village council issued an order prohibiting the harvest of eru and bush mango from our forests until further notice. Sources from the palace say, the women involved are going to face the full wait of customary law and the law of the state.

5.2.4 Angle on functions of a biodiversity resource

By angling a story on the functions of a biodiversity resource, we seek to give it a practical base with which listeners can identify and understand its usefulness,

advantages, benefits, conveniences, services. We stress what the community stands to lose in the absence of, or gain in the presence of the resource.

Examples 1: (alarmist or whistleblowing angle to draw attention)

- **1.** *The last remnant of the forest without which the people of Ndu cannot have any water has been reduced to ashes and smoldering trunks by a wild fire.*
- **2.** *Four gorilla families with potential to bring in 30 million CFA francs in tourism revenue for the Tinto rural council have been eaten to extinction by the villagers. The last individual of the family of four was shot yesterday by a local hunter.*
- **3.** *Tragedy has struck the people of Eyomojock as the last patch of forest which provided eru has been given out to a multi-national company for a palm plantation. The clearing of the 100.000 hectares of forest allocated by government to the foreign company is expected to be completed in 4 months. This will mean, the local people will never ever again have eru, a food plant legated by their ancestors from time beyond the stretch of our memory.*
- **4** *It is feared that, bush mango which is an every-day food item in the cuisine of the people of the SWR of Cameroon may no longer be found in the forests of Ndian Division if nothing is done to stop the on-going accelerated harvesting. Much of it is exported to neighboring Nigeria,*

But, we may not always present such interests from a negative or alarmist perspective. After all, environmental journalism is not all about gloom and doom. Let us make an effort to identify and point to our listeners the existence of opportunities even in gloomy situations.

We can also angle or frame from **an opportunity pointing perspective**, that is, a positive perspective.

Example: *A forest resource expert has predicted that, eru will finish from the forests of the Lebialem Division in the next few years as a result of over exploitation. The prediction was made by Mr. Mpella Masso Moloki, the local head of the Forestry department in Ekondo Titi in at the end of a two day training seminar for local*

journalists. He disclosed that, food stuff traders have begun trooping in from the cities and are buying huge quantities of eru for consumption in Cameroonian cities of Buea, Limbe Douala, and for export to neighboring Nigeria. Mr. Moloki attributed the influx of eru traders to the opening of a newly constructed highway to traffic. He warned that, the situation is seriously disturbing as this is going to cause a significant drop in stocks of eru in the forest forests of the South West. This in turn will lead to shortages for the villagers. In the end, villagers will have no eru to eat again as they have always done from the time of their ancestors.

Examples

Instead of: *A mother chimpanzee was shot and killed this afternoon leaving her baby alone.*

Could be: *A baby chimpanzee survived an attack by a hunter this afternoon, in which her mother was killed. A concerned passerby picked the baby chimp and handed it to the local officials of the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife in Kumba. An authoritative source from the wildlife department disclosed that, the baby chimp will be taken to the Botanical Zoo in Limbe for proper care.*

Example 2.1: *A community-based women's group in Nyassoso has embarked on a vast project to cultivate eru which has gone extinct in the surrounding forests. The decision to cultivate eru which used to be harvested is reassuring to the people of the area who could in the months or years ahead have eru permanently available.*

Example 2.2: *Senior scientists from the Ministry of Scientific Research have declared that, villagers in the South West can have more bush meat to eat and sell by rearing cane rats, snails and rabbits than hunting protected animals and running the risks of going to prison as a result. In a meeting held in Tombel yesterday, the scientists said, animals like cane rats, rabbits, snails otherwise known as "slow boys" produce many babies at a time and this at least twice a year. They acknowledged that, the meat obtained from these animals for food taste nice and provides lots of proteins. It also sells as hot cake on the city markets.*

Chapter Six

How to Structure an Educative Program on Biodiversity

Learning goal

At the end of this chapter, we should be able to design a program on biodiversity in a logical and easy-to-understand sequences for listeners .

6.0 Programs formats

As we have already discussed in preceding pages, we are expected to tailor news stories in way that the information therein should educate local people and raise their consciousness on biodiversity conservation issues. We are expected do more and better by producing programs of longer running time of 6.5, 13.5, 26, and 52 minutes. The duration of these program formats gives us the time to better prepare the productions, and to better simplify and structure the programs.

The first objective we seek to achieve through the programs we produce is to capture and sustain the interest of listeners, so they can assimilate the information, message and knowledge contents of the program. To achieve this objective will depend on what topic or theme the journalist chooses, and how he/she structures the program.

6.1 Choosing a topic/theme

The type of topic that can make an interesting program may vary from one community to the other because; communities hardly have the same aspirations and concerns. But, certain qualities in a topic can be interesting to communities everywhere any time. They include:

6.2 Proximity/ issues close to home/meaningfulness/relevance

Generally, the underlying factor that determines the relevance of a topic/theme for the listeners is its proximity. By proximity in this specific context, we mean the programs we produce are relevant or meaningful to our immediate community that is, they should be on issues that directly or indirectly have an effect on the lives of the listeners.

Example: *Program on a radio station in Manyu on how to cultivate eru, on how to organize a horse race.*

6.3 Utility/need satisfaction

Listeners will like tune in and stay hooked if the topic in the program directly and immediately touches on their needs and their aspirations, something they have long been longing for.

Example: *Topics on issues like what the local people can do to reap money from forest resources without compromising the use of those resources by generations to come, will certainly entice listeners because that is an issue of money, livelihoods, and need satisfaction.*

6.4 Knowledge/substance

The topic should have substance, that is, it should be one which contains or carries something new, something the listeners can in the end take home as a plus in his/her knowledge, especially knowledge which can readily be used to solve a problem or gain something as an individual or as a community.

Experience shows that, our listeners generally want to understand why things happen (or have happened) the way they happen their communities.

Topics which inform, educate and provide knowledge generally capture listeners.

6.5 Sense of place

The topic which we choose should also be about where we are. Generally, a topic which deals with something that is unique to, or rooted in our community can be more exciting than one which deals with issues far away. Topics with the colour and flavor of our local culture are preferable. People easily identify with them. If it is a problem, it should be one being experienced by the people in the community.

Example: *A program on draught makes more sense to the people living in the semi-desert village of Waza in Far North Region of Cameroon than talking to them about non-forest products in Mamfe or Yokadouma, when they have never seen a forest let alone a tropical forest.*

6.6 Sense of geography: Sense of place also refers to sense of geography. A topic theme that makes references to known names of sites, villages, forest patches, streams, rivers, hills, mountains etc. within the community readily catches listeners' interests.

6.7 Broader Perspective

It is true that for a topic to make sense to listeners, it should be sufficiently based on local content. However, a topic dealing with a broader issue, or an issue outside of the community that can make listeners better understand their own issues at the local level is also welcomed.

Example: *A topic on how the local people in Kivu in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (RDC) participate in the management of the Kirunga National Park broadcast on.....in Mora will certainly interest the people of Korup because, it gives them a new perspective to the management of a park like theirs.*

The topic sounds so far, yet so near because of the commonality of interests between the people of Kivu in RDC and Korup in Cameroon. The people of Korup will be eager to listen to a discussion on the topic because they would want to know how parks are managed elsewhere. Though far away, such a topic therefore has local ramifications.

6.8 Select topics /themes with inherent biodiversity conservation issues.

Select topics that are directly linked to biodiversity conservation issues and practices.

Example:

6.9 Use the high definition approach

By high definition, we mean the topic selected for the program should be that which can be clearly defined, explained and made understandable to the listeners.

Example 1: *Choosing eru as a topic for a program is NOT a high definition topic, because it is not clear, it is not specific.*

Example 2: *Scarcity of eru on our market, or overharvesting of eru from our forest*

Narrow down the subject so that the listeners are focused on the central issue. Do not overload the program with so many issues

6.10 Construct appropriate storyline

Consider producing a program on biodiversity as telling story about an aspect of it. The structure of a programme on environment intended to educate and bring about change in behaviour and attitude can be built on reversing the cause- impact-consequence principle which characterizes environmental phenomena. This will mean starting programme with consequences (and not with causes) and back-tracking the process to “cause” by respecting the journalism values of familiarity/closeness/proximity/home interest relevance/meaningfulness as discussed in preceding pages. On the basis of this logic, the structure of a program could then be as follows:

6.11 First sequence: open with impact(s)

State an observed problem, negative practice, positive practice, relevant idea, and new phenomenon, and highlight the direct consequence(s) on the lives of the local people.

Example:

- Native people angry as they are not given financial dividends derived from ecotourism in their locality as prescribed by law
- Families worried as they no longer have eru and bush mango for food
- Village people happy for they can now rear snails or cane rats for food and for sale
- Disruptions in the socio-cultural lives of the local people

6.12 Second sequence: identify and explain causes of problem

- State the direct and indirect cause(s) of the phenomenon
- Describe and explain the causes:

- Human actions: felling of trees, bush fires, illegal hunting, overharvesting?
- Weak or absence of law enforcement due to corruption?
- Lack of commitment from government and other organization?
- Result of scientific research?

6.13 Third sequence: attempt to identify solutions:

Without being very categorical, state possible solution(s) at the level of:

- what the individual should do and /or should not do
- what the local community should do and /or should not do
- what NGOs/institutions should do and /or should not do
- what governments should do and /or should not do
- what the international community should do and /or should not do

6.14 Fifth: Conclusion

- Recall the important points in the program
- Point out a particularly successful initiative or action of individuals, local communities, NGOs, international community and governments, (if any) as one to emulate
- Point out a particularly bad initiative or action of individuals, local communities, NGOs, international community and governments, (if any) as one not to imitate
- Make a useful observation, useful comment, a call, and appeal as a take-home message

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