

# ADDRESSING CLIMATE DATA GAPS THROUGH THE USE OF LOCAL RADIO SHOWS TO INFLUENCE POLICY MAKING AT THE DEVOLVED GOVERNMENT LEVEL IN KENYA

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Policy-making is the process of transforming ideas into implementable action that creates a starting point for change. During a policy-making process, there has to be effective communication between the policymakers and the relevant stakeholders so that information can be exchanged by both parties. Evidence-based policies, such as the ones on climate adaptation, are drafted based on the availability and accuracy of existing data. Whenever climate data gaps exist, they hinder the efficacy of the proposed policies. Kenya is currently faced with a climate data gap crisis that continues to hamper climate adaptation efforts.

### 1.1 Key Insights on Kenya's fight against Climate Change

1. Article 42 of the 2010 Constitution of Kenya gives power to the people to formulate legislation at both the national and devolved (county) government levels aimed at protecting the environment for the benefit of the present and future generations.<sup>1</sup>
2. The onus of drafting climate adaptation and mitigation policies has always been left to policymakers at the national government level. Through the use of a top-down approach in the policy-making process, the policymakers at the devolved county government level are required to enforce the decisions that trickle down the command chain.
3. Given the fact that each of the 47 county governments in Kenya experiences different effects of climate change, there is a need for policymakers at the local community level to tailor specific climate adaptation policies that address the unique problems facing the communities within their region.
4. Region-specific policies on climate adaptation cannot be drafted without inputs from all local stakeholders. Policymakers at the devolved government units must find a mechanism that connects them directly to the local stakeholders. Through this mechanism, they will be able to bridge climate data gaps as well as take into consideration the views of the public to enable them to develop sustainable policies that will be widely accepted once they are officially rolled out.

### 1.2 Climate Change Adaptation Challenges

Previous TEP-As have highlighted the following climate adaptation challenges:

- TEP-A 2016 underlined challenges in the coordination of climate change and adaptation across multiple levels of government. It also highlighted an absence of climate data that aid in conducting assessments that include the provision and use of climate services.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kenya, L. O. (2013). The Constitution of Kenya: 2010. Chief Registrar of the Judiciary.

- TEP-A 2017 called for the need for higher-resolution information on climate change impacts and its risk to societies. It also brought out the challenge of coordination and coherence in supporting policy integration.<sup>3</sup>
- TEP-A 2018 pointed out the lack of community knowledge on climate change and their misconception of risk involved, a lack of full participation by the indigenous and local people in adaptation planning and integration processes, as well as a cross-sectoral and inter-ministerial collaboration challenge.<sup>4</sup>
- TEP-A 2019 identified the knowledge awareness gap with regards to climate change impacts and risks. It also highlighted limited financial capacity to address risks, policies, and regulations as challenges that the public and private sector faced concerning adaptation.<sup>5</sup>

Throughout these technical papers, there have been recurring challenges such as the *absence of climate data and services, together with coordination problems within sectors and governments*. These particular challenges are still very prominent within Kenya. Over the years, they have hindered the formulation and implementation of policies that grant local communities the ability to anticipate climate change and therefore prepare themselves better in their quest to build a climate-resilient future.

## 2. PROPOSED SOLUTION TO THE ADAPTATION CHALLENGE

According to the TEP-A 2017 report, the absence of high-resolution data should not warrant inaction since climate adaptation efforts can still be pursued despite the existing information gaps. We took this particular challenge as an inspiration for our solution. *We propose addressing the climate data gaps as a basis to influence policy-making through the use of youth-led local radio shows*. This solution seeks to holistically incorporate the 2020 theme of “Education and Training, Public Participation, and Youth to Enhance Adaptation Action”.

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<sup>2</sup> Secretariat, U.N.F.C.C.C. (2016). Opportunities and options for enhancing adaptation actions and supporting their implementation: reducing vulnerability and mainstreaming adaptation. *Technical Paper, Bonn, Germany*. Retrieved from [https://unfccc.int/files/adaptation/groups\\_committees/adaptation\\_committee/application/pdf/tp\\_adaptation\\_2016.pdf](https://unfccc.int/files/adaptation/groups_committees/adaptation_committee/application/pdf/tp_adaptation_2016.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Secretariat, U.N.F.C.C.C. (2017). Opportunities and options for integrating climate change adaptation with the Sustainable Development Goals and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030. *Technical paper, Bonn, Germany*. Retrieved from [https://unfccc.int/files/adaptation/groups\\_committees/adaptation\\_committee/application/pdf/techpaper\\_adaptation.pdf](https://unfccc.int/files/adaptation/groups_committees/adaptation_committee/application/pdf/techpaper_adaptation.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Secretariat, U.N.F.C.C.C. (2018). Opportunities and options for enhancing adaptation planning in relation to vulnerable ecosystems, communities, and groups (Vol. 20459). *Bonn, Germany*. Retrieved from [https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/TP2018\\_3.pdf](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/TP2018_3.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Secretariat, U.N.F.C.C.C. (2019). Opportunities And Options For Adaptation Finance, Including the Private Sector. *Bonn, Germany*. Retrieved from [http://tep-a.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/TEPA2019\\_TP\\_OpportunitiesandOptionsforAdaptationFinance.pdf](http://tep-a.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/TEPA2019_TP_OpportunitiesandOptionsforAdaptationFinance.pdf)

## 2.1 Why the choice of Radio as a potential mechanism to be used by local policymakers?

When compared to television, the internet, podcasts, and blog posts; radio is still the most popular and widely used means of acquiring information, news, and entertainment in Kenya. 79.5% of the Kenyan population has access to a radio terminal.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, Kenya has a 27% illiteracy rate according to UNESCO's Youth and Adult Literacy report. These findings justify the use of radio shows as the most feasible communication channel.<sup>7</sup>

Public participation is a very critical phase in the policy-making process. In Kenya, policymakers often host public gatherings in conferences so that they can engage with the relevant stakeholders. These forums are susceptible to interruptions by natural disasters such as floods or public health crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. However, radio transmissions can still take place under such unfortunate events. Therefore, by taking advantage of radio programs, policymakers are able to carry out their work and still reach out to a huge portion of their targeted audience.

Our proposed solution takes the form of youth-led radio shows aired by national and local vernacular stations that are designed to educate, interpret, and collect data on climate change and its risks on local populations. According to GeoPoll, as of February 2019, radio stations that broadcast in Swahili attract the highest number of listeners across all age groups.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, 38% of listeners above 35 years were drawn to radio stations that broadcasted primarily in local vernacular languages. Given the fact that all 47 counties in Kenya are ethnically diverse, it will be possible for policymakers to reach out to everyone within a particular county through a language that they are most comfortable with using already existing local radio stations.

## 2.2 How does the proposed solution incorporate the 2020 theme of "Education and Training, Public Participation, and Youth to Enhance Adaptation Action?"

- **Education**

The proposed radio shows will provide a platform where policymakers can exchange information with the relevant stakeholders. The lack of community knowledge on climate change and its perceived risks creates a crisis that policymakers must solve. The policymakers at the county government level who work in departments that are concerned with environmental and natural resource issues can partner with officials at the already established Kenya Meteorological Department (the bank base for climate data), as well as other multinational and

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<sup>6</sup> Kenya National Bureau of Statistics. (2018). *National ICT Survey Report*. Retrieved from <https://ca.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/National-ICT-Survey.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> UNESCO. *Youth and Adult Literacy*. Retrieved from <http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/FIELD/Nairobi/Youth%20and%20Adult%20Literacy.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> Okulo, A. (2019, Feb 26th). *Kenya TV And Radio Audience Data: February 2019*. Retrieved from <https://www.geopoll.com/blog/kenya-tv-radio-data-2019/>

intergovernmental agencies such as UNEP to provide county-specific scientific data on climate change for their listeners. In addition, they would also inform the general public about the contents of existing legislation such as the Climate Act of 2016, the Energy Act of 2019, and the Logging Ban Act.

Locals would then have the opportunity to interact with the policymakers on live radio by sending texts or placing calls to ask questions about the information provided. Furthermore, the locals would then be able to educate the policymakers by providing them with indigenous knowledge on how the local communities can combat climate change. By infusing the scientific as well as the indigenous data, the policymakers would be able to formulate and implement sustainable county-specific policies.

- **Training**

In Kenya, national and local radio stations usually carry out roadshows to promote their services to the public. These roadshows tend to be well received by local communities. Policymakers at the grassroots level could use these avenues as a test-meter for policies in the ideation phase so that they can judge whether they will be embraced or not. Training services can be offered during the roadshows, such as the unveiling of drought-resistant crops and solar cooling systems to maximize food storage to farmers. Local entrepreneurs could also be trained on business strategies that are adaptation centered since local businesses play an integral role within local communities.

- **Public Participation**

The UNFCCC (2016) report stated that engaging locals through a non-discriminatory participatory process at the beginning of the adaptation process is crucial. In turn, developing adaptation plans and policies with them ensures that the policies being generated offer long term stability since they are sustainable in nature.

It is important to note that each county in Kenya faces different challenges posed by climate change. For example, the changes in the weather patterns will affect the planting cycles of a tea farmer in Kericho county, cause drought and famine in Turkana county, and perennial floods in Kwale County. Therefore policymakers at the devolved government level are required to tailor policies that address specific climate adaptation needs within their counties. These radio programs would provide a platform for the public to voice their opinions and provide recommendations for such policies.

- **Youth**

The youth will act as the focal points for the convergence of the policymakers, communities and other stakeholders such as the Kenya Meteorological Department. They will be responsible for organizing and co-hosting the radio shows with invited guests such as policymakers, synthesizing the climate information and disseminating it to the local communities. Furthermore, they would be involved in sending feedback to policymakers at the county government level.

The radio programs that are focused on climate adaptation would provide the youth with an opportunity to learn more about climate science. Under Section 21 of Climate Change Act, plans are underway to integrate climate change studies in the syllabi used by schools at the basic, secondary and tertiary levels but the rollout has been very slow. Therefore, there is a need to facilitate the creation of climate change awareness outside the official school channels.

### **2.3 The “Meet-Me-Halfway” Approach**

As earlier stated, the majority of existing policies that are centred on climate change and environmental issues were drafted by the national government before being passed down to the county governments for adoption and implementation. This perennial reliance on a top-down approach when combating climate-related issues has significantly impeded programs and efforts that are geared towards enhancing climate adaptation in Kenya.

Our proposed solution injects a new perspective whereby the local community is working one-on-one with their policymakers for the greater good. We believe that the top-down and bottom-up approaches can occur simultaneously. As a result, we coined the term - *“Meet-Me-Halfway” Approach*. This term refers to a governance system in which the functions devolved by the national government to the county governments (top-down) meets the bottom-up approach where the policymakers obtain reliable and accurate data on climate trends from the grassroots’ levels.

## **3. CONCLUSION**

Youth-led radio programs driven by the principles of gender balance and inclusivity will make it possible to sensitize and educate the masses at the grassroots’ level on climate change-related issues. These radio shows will also make it possible for policymakers at the national and county government level to receive feedback on the efficacy and progress of existing climate adaptation initiatives at the grassroots’ level. Armed with such reliable and comprehensive data, the policymakers would then be able to draft sustainable policies that will contribute to the building of a climate resilient future for Kenya.

## **4. CALL TO ACTION**

In order for our proposed solution to be actualized, there is a need for collaborative partnerships between all stakeholders in Kenya using the *“Meet-Me-Halfway” Approach* with an emphasis on public participation. This proposal will require an inter-generational and multi-sectoral approach where all the actors recognize the importance of one another and also pull their weight to fight a problem that we all face - climate change. Adaptation is a global problem which has to be tackled locally. By formulating county-specific policies on climate adaptation, we shall be able to build country-wide resilience to climate change.