



MEDIA AND ENVIRONMENT TRAINING WORKSHOP

DATE: NOVEMBER 24th 2010

VENUE: MOKOLODI WORLD VIEW CONFERENCE CENTRE

UNDP/UNEP POVERTY AND ENVIRONMENT INITIATIVE, BOTSWANA

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT WILDLIFE AND TOURISM

MEDIA AND ENVIRONMENT TRAINING WORKSHOP REPORT

DATE: 24th NOVEMBER 2010

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OBJECTIVES:

1. To update media practitioners on current and emerging environment and development issues
2. To enhance appreciation of environmental issues among media practitioners towards increase environmental reporting
3. To assess challenges and opportunities of environmental reporting and define actions for the improvement of environmental reporting
4. To scope capacity building for media practitioners so as to enhance quality and quantity of coverage Of environmental issues in the media for increased public awareness.

OPENING REMARKS (UN Resident Coordinator)

The workshop started with opening remarks given by the United Nations Resident Coordinator, Ms. Khin Sandi Lwin. In her remarks, she highlighted the importance of the media in influencing public opinion. She emphasized the need for the media to sensitize the public about how the daily activities they do have an effect on planet earth. She went on to say the importance of the media in enlightening the people is in line with the Vision 2016 pillar of 'An informed and educated nation.' Madam resident coordinator lamented that even though the media is a very involved partner in other various societal topics such as HIV/AIDS, their reporting on issues of the environment is very wanting. She appreciated that the workshop was a good platform to discuss ways to enhance the media reporting on the environment and development.

She called for improvement of the communication and rapport between the environmental sector and the media, saying there must be a balance between willingness to provide information and willingness to cover the environment subject. She expressed concern that though an issue like climate change is very serious and affecting everyone, there is very little reported about it in Botswana.

In her conclusion she encouraged the media practitioners to think of ways of making environmental issues a very interesting and marketable topic just as sex, politics, human tragedy and scandals seem to be.

MAJOR ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES IN BOTSWANA (DEA)

Ms. Baleseng made a brief presentation of the environmental issues as highlighted in the National Policy on Natural Resources Conservation and Development of 1990. She highlighted the various issues, their causes and the possible measures of dealing with such. Main emerging environment and development issues that were identified are:

- Degradation of Rangeland,
- Pressure on Water Sources
- Depletion of wildlife
- Air and Water pollution
- Over exploitation of some veldt products.

CLIMATE CHANGE (MET SERVICES)

Mr. Selolwane's presentation covered an explanation of climate change, greenhouse gases, evidence of climate change in Botswana, impacts of climate change as well as measures of adapting to the situation. He highlighted that climate change is caused by an increase in the green house gases in the atmosphere. He explained that the 19th century saw a dramatic increase in such gases as carbon dioxide, sulphur dioxide etc, due to increased industrialization and population demands.

On evidence of climate change in Botswana, Mr. Selolwane said it has been observed that there is a decrease in the number of days with low minimum temperatures and an increase in the number of days with high maximum temperatures. He went on to say there is evidence of more heat-waves, droughts and extreme rains (citing the recent storms that hit Maunatlala village and others). He highlighted some of the socio-economic impacts of climate change as disruption of agriculture and other economic activities.

The participants were sensitized on some of the measures for adapting to the situation such as; growing of fast maturing crops, minimum tillage to reduce moisture loss, reusing treated water, rainwater harvesting, compact fluorescent lighting as well as the use of solar energy (more so we have ample hours of sunshine in Botswana).

COMMENTS/QUESTIONS

- A comment was made to the effect that the government should start thinking along the lines of subsidizing prices of solar energy equipment to promote its usage among the public.
- There was a question on whether there is any government fund for the youth to promote mitigation measures such as solar or biogas production businesses
- What is the government doing in response to climate change following the United Nations Convention on Climate Change conference of parties in Copenhagen.
- Government was commended for the establishment of the Ministry of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism (MEWT) as it shows commitment to addressing issues of the environment. However this was observed to be not enough. There was a consensus that if issues of the environment could be put at the fore as it is the case with HIV/AIDS, it would improve awareness and change public perception. The Ministry must be more forthcoming on information about environment and development

Responses

- Participants were informed that the Ministry of Environment Wildlife and Tourism has an environmental fund which is aimed at projects that can improve people's livelihoods but they protect the environment. The fund does not target the youth in particular, however, youth groups can be supported through the fund.
- In regard to climate change, the government is in the process of developing a climate change adaptation policy and the MEWT is in the process of developing a communication strategy that will assist in publicising the issues of climate change to the public.

- Another comment was that since the MEWT provides policy guidance for other sectors to ensure effective mainstreaming of environmental issues, monitoring tools are necessary to inform MEWT on how the other sectors and institutions are doing.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY, LIVELIHOODS AND POVERTY ISSUES IN BOTSWANA-(PEI)

The presentation was made by Mr. Modukanele and he started by giving a brief definition and summary of the Poverty and Environment Initiative programme. He explained that the programme supports governments to integrate environmental sustainability into National Development Processes so that development is not undermined by unsustainable use of natural resources. He highlighted that it is very important to build capacity for planners to integrate poverty and environment issues into development planning. Though he also spoke about environmental issues and conservation measures, his emphasis was on environmental conservation that benefits the people.

He went on to say the role of the media in environmental management is determined by the relationship between the media and government and other stakeholders.

CHALLENGES OF ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTING- (MISA)

A number of issues were raised that the media practitioners identified as their reasons for not effectively reporting on issues of the environment. Among them were:

- limited sources of information
- lack of political will
- government red tape
- limited rapport between government and the media
- editors' tendency to go for those who pay for slots
- Shortage of reporters / desks (no specialization). This is due to shortage of funds and it leads to reporters switching and therefore no continuity.
- Government officers' reluctance to give out information.

EXPERINCES IN ENVIRONMENTAL JOURNALISM/EFFECTIVE ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTING (MESH MOETI)

Mr. Moeti started with a brief history of the evolution of environmental journalism which he said started in the 18th century and exploded in the 1980s. He said though it is still very low in Botswana, generally it has caught on in most media organizations.

He attributed poor or little environmental reporting to:

- lack of training (media studies is relatively a new discipline in Botswana)
- considered less prestigious
- no quick and easy answers

In his presentation, he sensitized the media practitioners to know their role as:

- watch dog
- Agenda setters (they should take initiatives, ask questions and not wait for someone to call them for press conferences).
- Herald of success stories.

The media should desist from reporting only the bad news.

He identified the following as possible sources of environmental information: government, non-governmental organizations, research information, companies' annual reports and anonymous tipsters or whistle blowers.

On possible areas to report about, Mr. Moeti highlighted the following as some of the current and emerging issues that the media can report on and improve public awareness:

- waste disposal
- Human - wildlife conflicts
- demand for residential and agricultural land
- hunting vs. photographic tourism
- bio fuels
- climate change

He went on to say the stories written about the environment must capture the human element. This would make the stories interesting to the readers as they can relate with such. He said to achieve this, the media practitioners should where possible try and ask for indigenous/ traditional knowledge of the people in the area concerned.

Mr. Moeti acknowledged that journalism is about reporting things while they are still new but he called upon the media practitioners to sometimes try and exercise some patience and wait a bit for facts as this would create good relations with those who give out information.

He emphasized that he expects to see more environmental reporting as the media is growing and there is an increase in the number of learned journalists and new forms of media.

COMMENTS/QUESTIONS

- There was a comment that instead of calling for specialization, environmental reporting should be mainstreamed into other issues such as sports, music etc. This would ensure that every reporter is able to report on issues of the environment.
- He went on to say what is important is meaningful coverage; the reporters should be able to ask the right questions.

WAY FORWARD (Plenary)

The following were suggested as ways of achieving effective environmental reporting:

- training of media practitioners
- training of government officers on how to deal with media
- capturing the human element in environmental news.
- improved rapport between government/environmental sector and the media
- targeting and sensitizing the editors since they are the ones who make decisions as to what to cover
- media must use other ways of finding information and not just questionnaire since it has limitations.

CLOSING REMARKS

In his closing remarks, Mr. Thapelo Ndlovu of MISA Botswana expressed appreciation at the proceedings during the workshop. He was very happy with the rapport created and the partnership and said he hoped that the workshop was just the beginning of a sustainable relationship that would yield good results. He emphasized the importance of strengthening the relationship between the environmental sector and the media, be it through training or regular forums such as the just ended workshop.

He highlighted the need for public relations officers in the environmental sector to equip themselves with knowledge and information about environmental issues and activities since they should be the ones dealing with the media. He said this would reduce the delays which usually lead to poor relations with the media thereby resulting in very little or no reporting on issues of the environment.

PARTICIPANTS AT THE PEI/MEWT MEDIA AWARENESS WORKSHOP

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MEDIA & ENVIRONMENT TRAINING WORKSHOP

Date: November 24th 2010

Venue: Mokolodi World View

Objectives:

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Workshop facilitator: MISA Botswana

Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA)

Repertoires: Ms. L. Baleseng and Ms K. Ntshiamisang

Time	Activity	Presenter	Session chair/facilitator
08h00-08:30	Arrival & registration	All	MEWT PRO
0830 - 0840	Introduction – Participants introduce themselves, their media and their audiences – and say how often they report on environmental issues	All	
08:40 – 09:00	Opening Remarks	UN Resident Coordinator	
09:00 – 0920	Major Environmental Issues in Botswana	DEA	
09:20 – 09: 40	Discussion	All	
0940 – 10:00	Environmental Sustainability, Livelihoods and Poverty Issues in Botswana	Food and Poverty policy coordinating section. MFDP	

10:00 – 10:20	Health Break		
10:20 – 11:00	Challenges of environmental reporting Group work	MISA	UN
11:00 – 11:30	Group Presentation and Feedback	All	
11:30 – 11:50	Effective Environmental Reporting (Research methods)	Expert Journalist	
11:50 – 12:15	Discussions	All	
12:15 -12:30	Way forward	DEA/PEI	
12h30– 13h30	Lunch		
13h30 – 15h30	Excursion:Manyelanong Vulture Sanctuary	All	DEA/DWNP
15:30 – 15:45	Closing Remarks	MISA	
END OF WORKSHOP			

Group (Questions)

- (a) Constraints and opportunities to environmental reporting in Botswana**
- (b) Action for government to assist journalist to report effectively on environmental issues**
- (c) Action by journalists to facilitate coverage of environmental issues**