



Developing
Countries
Farm Radio
Network

Network News

MAY 2003

The role of radio in addressing the consequences of conflict

Accurate and relevant information is often a casualty of conflict and war. Yet the need for practical information is great. In the last decade, conflicts killed nearly 2.3 million people. An estimated 23.5 million more people were in need of humanitarian assistance due to conflict. These millions of people face new situations and struggles as a result of conflict – and they need new information to cope. As information providers, radio broadcasters can provide valuable help.

For example, conflict creates food emergencies and hunger. Food supplies and livestock may be ruined; transportation and marketing routes may be cut off; sometimes infrastructure is destroyed; farmers may be killed, wounded or displaced. Food insecurity persists long after the fighting has stopped.

Radio programs that promote “survival crops” or that discuss how to rebuild seed supplies help farmers maintain or restore local food supplies.

When men and boys join battles, women, children and the elderly are often left behind. Many are forced to flee to refugee camps, where they face grave security and health risks, including sexual violence and inadequate food supplies. Overcrowding and poor hygiene increase the spread of diarrhea, cholera, measles, malaria and respiratory infections. People living through conflict who have experienced separation from their families, or violence and abuse, may also suffer from psychological, social and emotional illnesses.

Radio programs that include refugees among their listeners can help by discussing how to grow food in a refugee camp. Discussing the pain, stress and confusion of refugees is a valuable contribution to the healing process. Other programs might deal with the special health issues of refugee camps.

At Farm Radio Network, we know that radio is the most effective way to reach people – and for millions of victims of conflict, it is the only way. We also know that achieving food security is essential for conflict recovery and sustained peace. That is why we are producing scripts and broadcaster development material on conflict and conflict resolution. Scheduled for distribution this summer, these resources will help broadcasters provide the programs that their listeners need. The radio programs described above have been developed into scripts for distribution to our radio partners. Others, such as “Sharing the load after conflict: villagers start a revolving loan fund,” offer practical ideas to help rural people rebuild after the fighting has stopped. There is also material to help broadcasters address the special needs of women and refugees.

Not only can appropriate radio programs help individuals and communities cope with the consequences of conflict, radio can promote peaceful resolution to problems by providing a platform for discussion.

In our resource package for radio partners, we highlight some ways to use radio to promote peace and tolerance. We encourage using radio as a forum for community discussion – and making space for women, children and other groups. “Dispute over a sacred stream” demonstrates how mediation can be used to resolve conflict. We suggest practical ways that broadcasters can work with rural communities to facilitate meaningful dialogues about peace and conflict resolution.



Many of our partners already broadcast programs about conflict and peace. For example, Cooperative Work Association for Alternative Communication (COMUNALT) works to address conflict resolution in the Cauca region of Columbia. Beatriz Elena Garcia produces a radio program called *La Tulpa* where interviews, dramas and updates on current events allow listeners to explore issues of peace and understanding. Our resource packages share our partners’ experiences so that others can learn from them, and their listeners can benefit.

International Refugee Day – June 20, 2003



Conflict, civil war, and natural disasters such as drought or famine are just some of the reasons people are displaced from their homes or forced into refugee camps. In 2001, there were an estimated 14.9 million refugees and at least 22 million internally displaced persons - 70-80 percent of whom are women and children.

June 20th marks International Refugee Day. This year, take action to support refugees. Learn more about the challenges they face each day. Encourage governments to adopt policies that help refugees find safety or support organizations in your community that provide assistance to refugees.

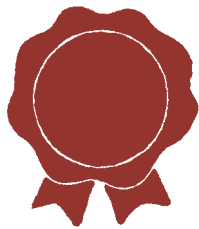
To help refugees cope with the realities of refugee camps, we have produced a number of practical radio scripts for our upcoming package, including “Health considerations for refugees,” and “Growing vegetables in a refugee camp.”

Partner update: GSA Award

The George Stuart Atkins (GSA) Award was established in 1991 to recognize the outstanding work of our radio partners. Each year it is awarded to a partner who demonstrates both a commitment to food security and excellence in radio broadcasting.

This year's recipient is Bernardo Caamal Itza of Radio Xepet in Mexico. Bernardo joined the Network in 1991 and since then has regularly contributed script ideas and topics.

Radio Xepet has been broadcasting to the Mayan people, in their own language, for over twenty years. Their radio programs focus on sustainable farming practices and the importance of indigenous knowledge. Broadcasts also include information on traditional herbal medicine, weather



patterns and updates on the daily market. Most of these programs come on the air in the afternoon, so that farmers, returning home from their maize fields, can tune in.

Bernardo uses our scripts and newsletter materials to help develop and broadcast his programs. In a recent letter to the Network, he wrote, "The scripts support us with information on agricultural topics and health. They also give us new directions where we can obtain more information."

As this year's recipient of the GSA Award, Bernardo will receive \$250 (US) to be used for professional development. Congratulations Bernardo and everyone at Radio Xepet for your contributions to rural communities!

Increasing support for agriculture

In April this year, Susan Whelan, Minister for International Cooperation, announced an increase in Canada's support for agriculture in developing countries. CIDA's investment in agricultural programming will reach \$500 million a year by 2008.

"With more than 1.2 billion people living in absolute poverty – mostly in rural areas – agriculture is critical to improving the lives of the poor in developing countries," said Minister Whelan. "We cannot end hunger, disease, inequality and poverty without supporting sustainable rural development through agriculture."

Developing Countries Farm Radio Network took part in the CIDA consultations last fall that contributed to the government's directions in agriculture programming. For more information, visit CIDA's website at <http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca>.



More from our partners...

"I am very happy for the work you are doing for us, and we are convinced that with the support of Developing Countries Farm Radio Network, a real change will take place in rural communities."

Mr. Louis Roland de Paul Nya, Radio Site-Dar, Cameroon

"I am very satisfied with the Network... The Network (material) informs our audience on important social and cultural issues."

Mr. Jean-Pierre Omanikali, Radio Rurale Congolaise

"This information is of paramount importance because we use it to help farmers improve their farming practices/methods and increase their production. Above all, it gives learning experiences from elsewhere in the world."

Mr. Daniel Adotu, AFRI Concern Foundation, Uganda



Maria Rodriguez – A virtual volunteer

At Farm Radio Network, we have many wonderful volunteers who help in our work. Though most are from the Toronto area, we also have a group of "virtual" volunteers. Through email and phone calls, these volunteers are able to complete translations, website work and research. Virtual volunteering makes it possible for people throughout Canada to contribute to our work.

Maria Rodriguez, from Alma, Quebec, has been a virtual volunteer since 2001. She assists in the Spanish translation of partner letters, surveys and emails. We asked Maria to share with you some of the reasons she started volunteering with Farm Radio Network:

I come from Venezuela, where I used to be a farmer myself. I know first hand the challenges farmers face in developing countries. Agriculture is hard work and a risky business by nature, having to deal with pests, floods and droughts. If you add to that market fluctuations, government policies, and lack of rural services you can have a recipe for a hard life.

In 2000 I began looking for volunteer opportunities in Alma (Quebec). I was looking for an organization with goals consistent with my values, where work experience in agriculture and food could be useful, and where I could use my Spanish. And I found the Network!

When asked why she thinks our work, and the work of our partners, is important, Maria says, "Because information and communication are powerful tools for change."

Jennifer Pittet, script writer and researcher, has worked with Maria since the beginning. "Maria is great! She provides thoughtful insights about the scripts she translates and is enthusiastic about each assignment – which makes her very easy to work with. I think her enthusiasm arises from her commitment to the partners and to our mission."

Thank you, Maria! Your experience and skills are an asset to our work. We hope to meet face-to-face sometime soon!



Supporting broadcasters to strengthen small-scale farming and rural communities.

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Now it is even easier to support rural development – we are accepting on-line donations. Please visit our website donations section at www.farmradio.org.

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