



news

Developing Countries Farm Radio Network

Visits to East and West Africa Increase Network's Radio Partners

Radio Broadcasters Share Their Vision for DCFRN

By Blythe McKay

My position as DCFRN's Development Communication Coordinator – responsible for working with our radio partners and growing the Network in sub-Saharan Africa – was propelled into action with two trips to Africa this past spring. I couldn't imagine a better way to start my work with DCFRN and to demonstrate to radio broadcasters in Francophone and Anglophone Africa that we are intent on working with them to produce agricultural and rural development program content for their listeners.

In April, I travelled to Nairobi, Kenya to participate in a pan-African community radio conference, which takes place in a different African country every three to four years. From there I headed to Western Kenya to spend a couple of days with the Ugunja Community Resource Centre (UCRC), a new partner



developing a community radio station. More can be read on page 3 on this dynamic new partner. UCRC has been very active since joining DCFRN by providing two scripts to the Network, one being on

the many uses of the Calliandra tree and another on organic farming practices. I had the opportunity to meet several local farmers who have improved their farming practices through learning activities provided by UCRC which they have in turn shared with other farmers.

The next stop on my East African journey was Uganda where I met with farmers, radio broadcasters and researchers who collaborate through radio to improve the lives of people in their communities. A huge problem facing small-scale farmers is banana bacterial wilt – a disease that is highly contagious and is destroying

banana production, which is a grave concern as this is Uganda's number one food crop. By working together farmers, radio broadcasters and researchers hope to control the spread of the disease.

In June I helped facilitate a workshop coordinated by DCFRN's Board Member, Dr. Helen Hambly in Dakar, Senegal. Teams of agricultural researchers and radio



Helen (left) and Blythe (right) visit an on-air studio of a community radio station in Senegal during the workshop funded by OPEC.

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Ugunja Community Resource Centre



Source: Voices, June 2005 Ugunja Community Resource Centre

UGUNJA COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTRE (UCRC), based in Siaya District in Western Kenya, recently became a Farm Radio Network partner and contributed a script to the March package about agroforestry.

UCRC was formed in 1992 as a community based organization by a group of women farmers, who created a small library of farming information in Ugunja town for the use of local people. Over the years this library expanded to include information on health and disability issues. According to *Aggrey Omondi*, UCRC's director, positive change and sustainable development should come from community members. "I wish to see a community that is more informed and equitable so that resources are shared, information is flowing freely and people are empowered," says Omondi. "UCRC's aim is to facilitate this without losing the vision of the community."

UCRC plans to start a community radio that will broadcast in the local language, and ensure that community voices are heard. The radio station would complement the work being carried out by the 15 learning centers UCRC has established throughout the district where community members can seek information from the books, volunteers and computers.

Before the radio station is operational, UCRC hopes to produce audiotapes by interviewing elders on certain topics. The tapes will be sent to the learning centers where local listening groups will use them. "Elders in the district have a wealth of knowledge, and UCRC sees the value in documenting that

knowledge," says Omondi. "This way the knowledge will not be lost and when we get our community radio station we will have some programs ready to air."

Christine Adhiambo is a member of one of the farmers' groups supported by UCRC. Her group consisting of 30 women and men pays 500 Kenyan shillings (equals 8 CAD) a year for membership. Christine often attends seminars sponsored by UCRC and then shares what she learns with the rest of her group. Through the UCRC she has learned techniques for increasing production of sweet potato, cassava, maize and sorghum. For example, she now plants her crops in lines rather than broadcasting them (tossing the seeds onto the soil). The difference she sees is that the plants don't compete for nutrients and production has increased.

Belonging to this group helps to reduce her workload. For example, one day people from the group will come to her farm and help her with her crops, another day they all go to another group member's farm and so on.

Future plans for her group include bulking cassava for rapid multiplication, rearing poultry, and planting sweet potatoes for both vine and tuber production.

Josephine Atieno also belongs to one of UCRC's farmer groups. In 2003, when traditional varieties of sweet potato and cassava were being ravaged by insects and drought, UCRC helped her group obtain clean, certified sweet potato and cassava planting materials which helped increase yields. UCRC also



Christine Adhiambo with a sample of her cassava crop





*Josephine Atieno with a tree called leucaena (*Leucaena leucocephala*) that is being promoted by UCRC. The tree provides fodder, fertilizer, and firewood*

helped her group to get involved in agroforestry. The women are planting trees to replace ones that have been used for charcoal. The trees they are planting are multipurpose - for example *Leucaena leucocephala*, which provides fodder for animals, is a natural fertilizer, and can be used for firewood. Josephine hopes that UCRC will help her to obtain a dairy goat, since she has learned how to cultivate and manage a fodder plot.

George Opondo has been an organic dairy farmer since 1992. Being organic means his cows consume feed that has not been sprayed with chemicals and he treats them with herbal remedies rather than antibiotics when they are ill. According to George, other farmers are beginning to see that it's affordable to raise organic dairy cows since there are few, if any, veterinary costs. George learned about organic agriculture from books at the UCRC library. He is one of UCRC's contact farmers, which means that he receives training on sustainable agriculture and shares what he learns with other farmers in the district. Visitors come to his farm to see his crops, herbs and animals. George also preserves plants that are in danger of disappearing by bringing them to his farm and growing them there. ↓



George Opondo standing in front of the UCRC building in Ugunja

Our new partner UCRC (Ugunja Community Resource Centre) interviews a female farmer about agricultural practices in Ugunja, Kenya. LARRRA/Kenya



broadcasters from Niger, Senegal, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, and Benin learned how they could collaborate and use radio as a tool to communicate agricultural research to farmers as well as seek feedback. Each of the teams learned skills on how to work as a team, how to write proposals for funding, and how to develop an action plan. OPEC funded this well attended workshop and project partners included DCFRN, the University of Guelph, the West African Council for Agricultural Research and Rural Development and REPA - Réseau d'Expertise des Politiques Agricoles.

As a result of these trips, we have seen partnership in DCFRN increase by 10 percent to more than 270 radio partners in 38 African countries. New partners came from 14 Francophone and Anglophone countries in West, Central, East and Southern Africa.

By meeting face to face with radio broadcasters I was able to hear from them and see with my own eyes the agricultural and rural development issues their communities face. Feedback from new and long-time broadcast partners about how the Network can help them with their radio work included skills development related to program content, management and evaluation, fostering partnerships between rural radio stations and research institutions, and developing innovative ways to adapt and translate network scripts into local languages.

These two trips have generated enthusiasm both among staff in Ottawa and among broadcasters belonging to the network overseas. DCFRN staff is eager to respond to new ideas and broadcasters now have a stronger link to our organisation. It was win-win for everyone! ↓

Photo credits for page 2 and 3 courtesy of Blythe McKay



Partnering with UNESCO

In the spring of 2005, *Developing Countries Farm Radio Network (DCFRN)* teamed up with the *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization*

(UNESCO) on a project that recognizes the importance of local broadcasters in Sub-Saharan Africa. Together, we created an educational and instructional CD-ROM that includes a rich variety of approaches to radio broadcasting in an aim to reduce hunger, increase food security and improve the lives of farming communities throughout Africa. We are encouraging broadcasters to review, adapt and broadcast the 30 scripts from the CD for their local audiences. The overall objective is to show our partners how their work contributes towards realizing the *Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)* established by the *United Nations* in September 2000 by all 189 of its Member States. ♻

What are these Millennium Development Goals? Eradicating extreme poverty and hunger; achieving universal primary education; promoting gender equality & empowering women; reducing child mortality; improving maternal health; combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; ensuring environmental sustainability; and developing a global partnership for development.

DCFRN and UNESCO believe that Radio has a unique and valuable role to play in helping to meet these MDGs. Radio broadcasters are especially crucial in Africa, for it is radio that best reaches the rural poor and bridges the divide created by distance and non-literacy. Network broadcasters reach a potential audience of 600 million people in more than 300 languages. We believe that the sharing of information is critical in changing attitudes and empowering people.

UPCOMING Events

- DCFRN & WUSC Annual General Assembly – November 4-6, 2005, Ottawa, ON
- We greatly appreciate and value the investments you have made in DCFRN's programs and services. We want to continue to build and strengthen these relationships with people and groups interested in our organization and are currently in the process of planning our first donor recognition event.



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

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How are we doing?

Here is your chance to provide us with your opinions, critiques and questions about DCFRN's *network newsletter*! Please take a few moments to review the questions below. We will consider your comments and provide a summary of your responses in our next issue.

Thank you for helping us serve you better!

Do you feel that the information provided in the newsletter is interesting?

- Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree
 Not Applicable

What types of articles would you like to see featured more often?

- Agriculture News Updates Partner Profiles
 Donor Profiles Other (please list)

Would you be interested in attending a DCFRN fundraising event?

- Yes No List types of events _____

Seriez-vous intéressé dans la réception de ce bulletin en français?

- Oui Non

Submit your comments to: **Developing Countries Farm Radio Network**

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