

network

news

FARM RADIO INTERNATIONAL



WATER IS LIFE

Everywhere in the world, people understand that *water is life*. Especially in rural areas. But water is also a resource, and sometimes a commodity. Thus, it is subject to the same kinds of problems as other resources and commodities. One of these problems is corruption. And because water is so critical, because ***water is life***, corruption in the water sector threatens lives and livelihoods. That's why it is critical for broadcasters and citizens to be informed and to speak about water corruption in their communities, and to learn how to help communities ensure that their water resources are preserved and distributed fairly.

Farm Radio International's 92nd script package is sponsored by the Water Integrity Network (WIN). WIN is a Germany-based non-profit organization that promotes anti-corruption solutions in water, sanitation and water resources management worldwide. WIN worked closely with Farm Radio International staff to shape this script package, as well as four Farm Radio Weekly-exclusive articles which deal with water integrity.

The ***water sector*** includes individuals, companies, organizations and public agencies that manage water resources and deliver water to users such as consumers and businesses. It includes large infrastructure projects such as dams and larger irrigation systems, as well as smaller projects to bring drinking or irrigation water to small communities.

Water integrity means that individuals and groups in the water sector behave in accordance with moral principles and standards. The principles, standards and the behaviours consistent with them create a preventive barrier to corruption.

The first script in the package is entitled *Water, a basic human need, but a privilege to the voiceless*. It tells the story of a community that is struggling towards good governance of its communal water system. The community faces challenges, including users who connect illegally to the system, and how to ensure that all users and system operators are aware of and abide by their rights and responsibilities.

Another script in the package is entitled *Water is life. Share it*. It dramatizes a situation in which a village introduces a communal irrigation scheme but not all are willing to share the water equally. Through several entertaining and often humorous scenes, the village struggles towards a more equitable distribution of their precious water.



©photo:ACDI/CIDA Pierre St-Jacques

Past scripts on water:

While Farm Radio International has published many scripts over the past 30 years on water re-sources, the issue of corruption in the water sector is new for us. You can find our scripts on water resources by visiting: <http://www.farmradio.org/english/radio-scripts/water.asp>.

The First Results are in!



If one of every five people exposed to an advertising campaign on the radio actually bought the product being advertised, the marketing world would be astonished. But that is exactly what has happened in a Farm Radio International project just completed in sub-Saharan Africa.

International development work faces two extremely tough and closely related problems. The first is to actually make a difference in the lives of the poor and the second is to measure that difference.

Farm Radio International has addressed both problems. We have made a significant difference to farmers and their families, and we have measured it. We have hard data, repeatable across sub-Saharan Africa, which shows the power of farm radio programs when they respect the voices of farmers themselves.

Thanks to more than 30 years of support from you, our small army of donors, we were able to gain the knowledge and reputation which led to this research. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation realized that we were the only organization in the world with the knowledge and background to measure whether a well-designed radio program could bring knowledge to the rural poor that they would actually use.

With their funding we designed and executed a development and research project. It lasted more than three years and covered five countries. We worked alongside 25 radio station partners to produce a new kind of rural radio program. One in five farm families who lived in villages reached only by the radio signal, and with no other intervention from the project team, made the decision to try out the practices they heard about in these new radio programs.

"This is impressive," says Dr. Marianne Banziger, the Deputy Director General of the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center, on seeing our preliminary results.

What we did and what we discovered

Farm Radio International, working with national agricultural experts, designed the project based on our 30 years of experience with farm radio broadcasters and our script package service. We designed the project so that we could measure, in a rigorous way, if our interventions worked.

The data the produced would have to stand up to international scrutiny .

We helped the broadcasting stations work with farmers in selected villages to find out what farmers felt they needed, both in terms of agriculture interventions and the kind of radio program that could help them understand how to implement those interventions. We called it a participatory radio campaign.

Each of our 25 partner stations conducted two radio campaigns on different, farmer-selected topics providing data on 50 rural interventions over a range of farming systems, languages, climates and soils. We worked closely with a small number of villages for each campaign, involving area farmers in selecting the topics, interviewing them for the programs, featuring their voices and perspectives, and visiting them throughout the campaign to get their feedback. We expected a significant number of farmers in these villages would try out the technologies. And they did.

Here are just some of the AFRI radio campaign topics:

Water and Soil Conservation:

- Proper preparation and application of manure and compost
- Promotion of crop rotation, mulching and intercropping

Preventing Post Harvest Loss:

- Use of neem leaves as natural pesticide

Crop Diversification:

- Promotion of new varieties of crops & disease resistant seeds

Animal Health and Housing:

- Disease control
- Building housing out of available materials

Marketing:

- Strengthening farmers' associations and cooperatives access to market



Radio Maria's Participatory Radio Campaign listening groups of women in Kitete village, Tanzania

But they were not the only ones!

What stunned all of us was what happened in the villages we did not visit during the project. We visited certain villages only at the end of the radio campaign, to conduct surveys. The people in these villages could listen to the radio program if they wanted to, but it was never promoted to them. If they listened it was because they found the program on their own.

In a huge endorsement of the power of radio that speaks to real needs, we learned that nearly three-quarters of the farmers in these villages regularly listened to the special broadcasts, even though they were not actively engaged in producing or giving feedback to the programs. It would be like a Canadian radio program having an audience of more than 20 million listeners. In fact in Canada a successful CBC radio program like *As it Happens* has an audience of just a tenth of that, 2 million.

Having a large, dedicated audience means little if it hears but does nothing with the information. In fact more than one in five of the farm families in those "passive listening communities" made a conscious decision to try the technology on their own. That means more than a quarter of the actual listeners in those communities took action.

This was no flash in the pan. We surveyed 4500 farmers, about half female, in 90 communities to find out: a) if they listened to the programs; b) how much knowledge they gained about the topics covered by the radio programs; and c) whether they had started practicing the improvements discussed in the radio programs. To measure whether farmers had really learned from the broadcasts, we asked all respondents to complete a 5-question quiz and scored how well they did. And we didn't just do this with radio program listeners.

Crucially, we also surveyed villages that were out of reach of the radio station's signal but had similar social and agricultural practices. That way we could be sure it was the radio programs that were making the difference. And that is precisely what the data showed.

Radio Works Wonders

These are exciting results for us, for our partners and most importantly for millions of smallholder farm families in sub-Saharan Africa. We have proven that today, radio is a powerful tool to enhance traditional face-to-face agricultural extension. Mr Kalimwayi from Dowa District where Zodiak broadcasting station had the active and passive listening communities under the AFRI program, an extension worker in Malawi put it best:

In just two (radio) campaigns our communities have embraced things that I tried to tell them for the last 10 years or so.

Our results show that, when radio programs are carefully planned with community input, feature the active voice of farmers, and cover topics that are appropriate, relevant and sustainable for smallholder farmers, they have a significant impact.

It is with sincere thanks to our Canadian donors who have supported us over the past 31 years that we were able to gain the experience and reputation to be able to obtain the grant and do this groundbreaking study. Your support continues to be a vital source of income for our core information services.

Capturing African Farmers' Voices: Farm Radio Weekly to Work with African Bureau Chiefs

Farm Radio Weekly (FRW) is Farm Radio International's weekly electronic news bulletin. It prides itself on making the farmer's voice and perspective heard. FRW is always seeking stories that feature small-scale sustainable farmers, and highlight their experiences, practices, successes and opinions. This year, the weekly has been able to publish several exclusive stories on the subjects of 'women and land', World Food Day and World AIDS Day all from the perspective of the smallholder farmer water integrity and soil health.

There are many farmers with stories to tell. In order to bring to light stories that other news services do not cover, Farm Radio International has recently signed agreements with JADE Productions in Burkina Faso, and Farm Radio Malawi, to establish Bureaus in francophone and southern Africa.

Each Bureau Chief will work with freelance African journalists and together, they will monitor evolving agricultural news stories. They will uncover stories of farmers who manage daily challenges, innovate, and overcome injustice. The journalists will research stories, interview farmers and gather key opinions and information.

This initiative aims to empower the millions of small-scale farmers across Africa who hear Farm Radio Weekly stories broadcast by our over 350 broadcasting partner radio organizations. It also serves to increase farmers' presence on the radio, and draw attention to their perspectives, needs and concerns.

We are grateful to The Canadian Auto Workers Social Justice Fund for supporting this project and becoming a partner in the production of Farm Radio Weekly.



Woman listening to the radio in her field in Ghana



Grace Amato (right) of Mega FM interviewing a farmer in Gulu, Uganda in 2008.

2010 George Atkins Communication Award Winner

Grace Amato, a broadcaster from Mega FM in Gulu, Uganda is the 2010 George Atkins Communication Award winner. This award recognizes rural radio broadcasters for their outstanding contribution to food security and poverty reduction in low-income countries.

Ms. Amato was part of the Mega FM AFFRI team which produced very popular radio campaigns on honey production. She has also been a Farm Radio International scriptwriter and produces a market price program twice a week for farmers in her region.

"I am extremely delighted to receive the news that I have won this prestigious award. The award has increased my love for the program The Farmers and Animal World and for the farmers too. They have become part of my family and my life."



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

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