

# **Food Security - Brief history to an initiative to provide sustainable radio programming and production in Kenya**

**By David Campbell Director, Mediae, Nairobi, Kenya**

## **Biography**

David Campbell is a media specialist in agricultural and environmental development.

He has twenty years experience of working with Governments, NGOs and the commercial sector in Eastern and Southern Africa, in the planning and implementation of effective communication strategies to meet target audiences' information needs. While his professional background is in agriculture, rural and environmental development, this is complemented with professional media production capabilities to an international level in video, radio and print. In 1996 he established The Mediae Trust - a UK registered charity - which specialises in the production and use of media for furthering development in East and Southern Africa. Mediae are currently working in Somalia, Kenya, Uganda and Mozambique.

## **Use of Radio to improve communications on Food security Issues in Somaliland**

There is a change in the way, governments, donors, development agencies and rural audiences are viewing the value role and effectiveness of data collection, analysis and provision and communication of information on food security issues are being managed today.

Traditionally food security data and analysis has been undertaken in developing countries amongst the rural poor households where lives are under pressure from a range of external threats. These may be war, insecurity, droughts, floods and disease, increased populations from migration etc.

The communities affected do not always have systems in place to support them through these periods of crisis. Donors wish to help and need detailed information on the food situation in rural households and on the ground. Methods have been developed to monitor and measure present and future needs taking into account the affected peoples way of life, markets, alternative support and traditional coping mechanisms.

FSAU for example works in Somalia with 29 highly trained field monitors working in rural areas and at local markets assessing the food security issues. This data is analysed and provided to the key donors for action where required. The donors then provide resources where possible to meet the needs of the rural audiences. This may be a food

drop in extreme emergency or the provision of funds ahead of time to ensure that food is stockpiled ready for distribution when required as a shortage develops.

FSAU was originally run by the World Food Programme when the war in Somalia was causing large-scale insecurity.

FSAU is now managed by FAO.

Generally the security situation is much improved and FSAU's primary functions still exists - to report on the food security.

However there is now a much greater interest in how the information, field reporters and the contacts and structures in place for FSAU can be used to support the rural people of a Somalia .

There is a continuum in situations like this that Barbara Huddleston of FAO talks about:

Poor	Less poor but occasionally Vulnerable	Sustainable Livelihood can survive threats	Rich
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FAO, working with FSAU, now wish to focus on how to use their experience and resources to move from people from the Poor to the Less vulnerable and the Less Vulnerable towards having a genuinely Sustainable Livelihood.

In order to do this it is essential to support development that will allow these different people to understand their place in the continuum and the role they can play in moving forwards couple with a range of interventions that provide the resources to make these moves.

One of the key areas of support that need to be established especially in Somalia is a regular respected and extensively used radio link.

Somalia has a strong tradition of using the radio for information; the country has the same language, an underdeveloped road or other communication network, and traditionally uses drama, poetry and song as a educational tool for communications.

A cornerstone of any attempt to support the development of a sustainable rural livelihoods programme in Somalia must be a highly popular regular radio programme which acts as a regular channel for communications - both ways- on issues and opportunities for change.

Mediae, a leading communications for development organisation, has experience in developing this kind of programming in the region and specifically in Kenya, Mozambique and Somalia.

Mediae believes that a communications strategy that uses radio as its lead could provide invaluable support to and probably will become the key factor in the success of any sustainable rural livelihood initiative in Somalia.

To understand the role and styles of radio being recommended for support to the changing face of Food security activities please look at the following presentation from David Campbell at the First International Workshop on Farm Broadcasting held in Rome

## ***Brief history to an initiative to provide sustainable radio programming and production in Kenya***

In 1979, I arrived in Kenya to work as a technical cooperation officer (TCO) with the Kenya government and sponsored by the British Government (ODA).

My job was to look at the use of media to support dissemination and improve communications with rural audiences in Kenya. I carried in my luggage the scripts from UK's most popular radio soap - "The Archers" - as I thought that this might, if adapted to rural Kenya, prove a good way to reach audiences in a long term sustainable way.

It took 9 years to persuade the Kenyans and the Donors that this was a worthwhile approach to rural communications.

The principle reason for the change in attitude towards radio came about because the government of Kenya decided to change the Voice of Kenya from a wholly government owned broadcast enterprise to a semi commercial operation.

The AIC where I was working no longer needed to fill one or two hours a day of what can only be described as boring radio designed to fill up the time.

For example a one hour interview with the head of the cotton research institute, who was only recorded because he was always available, he was the cousin of the radio producer, and he was full of technical jargon that no-one could understand.

So he was very boring and only 5 % of the farmers grew cotton - it is not hard to see that radio for farmers was neither popular nor useful!

The change to a commercial station meant that suddenly AIC had to pay for its airtime, and it could not afford even a 10-minute programme once a week at the new costs.

What was needed in my mind was a radio programme that really met the audiences needs.

It had to be so popular that the commercial sector would fight to advertise either side of it thus paying the airtime costs.

The donors and NGOs and government with useful messages would, at a low cost, be able to have an existing established channel to reach large rural audiences.

We started in 1992 to conduct research and started a local radio soap for Meru district which continued until 1997. We showed clearly that the radio continuous drama approach was the very popular in rural areas and this resulted in regular listeners who demonstrated clear changes in Knowledge, Attitude and Practice over a range of subjects broadcast and researched.

This success led to ODA providing funds in 1996 to move onto a National level soap.

### **The soap and magazine programme "Tembea na Majira"**

Today Tembea NA Majira is a rural radio "SOAP" programme, or continuous drama, which is set in a small Kenyan roadside village. Weekly actors are heard re-enacting scripts written by highly trained Kenyan writers who bring to life the loves and traumas of a small farming village with carefully interwoven messages about sustainable rural livelihoods.

The soap is 15 minutes long and has been running since January 1996. It now also includes a lively 15-minute magazine programme broadcast immediately after the soap, which allows the audience to send letters, and comments on the soap to be rebroadcast and competitions are also run on issues developed in the soap. More technical information can be carried in the magazine programme with in depth interviews with experts, farmers, success stories etc.

Research in August 96 (6 months after the start of broadcast) showed total adult listeners of above 6.9 million listeners.

At this time the soap was broadcast at prime time	(8.45 p.m.) on Mondays,
It was followed on with a magazine programme	(8.45 p.m.) on Wednesday
And the two were then repeated together as an omnibus	(8.00 -8.30pm) on Sundays.

### **Sponsorship of airtime stops**

The sponsor at that time was East African Industries. They paid the fee for broadcasting the programme which stood at about \$1,000 per 15 minute programme. This was a total bill of \$3,000 per week and essential to sustain the programme. Production costs were funded by DFID and other donors.

These sponsors, due to a change in the marketing management at EAI, decided in February 1998 to stop sponsoring the programme airtime. At that time it was also being managed by the Agricultural Information Center, a government department and they were finding it difficult to find funds and partners to share the production and airtime costs.

### **New management**

Mediae, a UK based organization took over the management of the programmes and got the programme back on air in October 1998 after 6 months off air.

Initially "Tembea Na Majira" came back with a much-reduced presence.

It was now broadcast once a week at a cheaper and less listened to slot.

Mediae had managed to get 2 different advertisers paying for the airtime costs

The broadcast continued until end of December 1999 running once a week and off the peak time.

### **Research**

The British Government, through the Department for International Development (DFID), agreed to sponsor some baseline research in August 1999, conducted by independent market and media researchers - Steadman and Associates.

The results of this research were made available in November 1999 as a base line and an indication of listener's habits.

Although the research had flaws in it, the general impression was that the radio programme had - not surprisingly - lost listeners over this period.

### **Dropping listenership - 4.5 million by August 99**

The listeners were calculated to have dropped to about 4.5 million rural adult listeners in August 1999 from the 6.9 million rural adult listeners in August 1996. It appeared from other research data that we were also losing the peri-urban and urban listeners due to increased FM radio coverage in certain towns. Although not our prime audience the poor in both these localities are considered important audiences to reach.

### **The challenge**

So in November 1999 it was decided that a major push was needed to rebuild our audience.

This was fully supported by the new and enlightened management of Cadburys who also took the view that we needed to build on the existing audience and create the most popular radio programme in Kenya with a dedicated audience of at least 9 million.

From the existing research and our experience we decided the following would rebuild and expand our audience.

- Return to the Soap plus Magazine formula
- Broadcast prime time one week day evening then repeat on a weekend evening to catch as wide a listenership as possible.
- Link with an existing Cadbury's initiative which is using direct marketing through mobile vans visiting markets where we can talk about the social issues and the radio programme alongside the sales pitch for Cadbury's. This could reach some 300,000 households per year in the rural and peri urban areas. We also deliver and distribute print materials to these audiences reaching even wider audiences.
- Research the information needs of the audiences again and try to meet these needs in the soap and magazine programme.

### **Success to date**

We initiated (1 and 2 above) - the return of the magazine programme, back to prime times and repeats the soap on Sunday in April 2000.

We initiated the Vans in January 2001.

We are presently conducting more detailed audience needs research and in October 2001 will conduct an extensive quantitative research following up on 1999, 2000 base line and KAP studies as well as audience listenership.

However the effect of these changes in the research from the end of 2000 shows we now have an audience of some 7.2 million listeners and have measurable changes in Knowledge, Attitude and Practice on a wide range of subjects affecting sustainable rural livelihoods

### **Conclusion - Radio soap and magazine programmes to support food security and sustainable livelihoods in Somalia.**

We recommend taking the existing capabilities of both FAO and FSAU in Kenya and Somalia and developing in conjunction with MEDIAE a radio soap and magazine programme based on the experiences of other regional activities in this area.

The soap and magazine programme will act as a critical communication channel between the audience of rural, peri-urban people and the government and donors as they try to seek sustainable livelihoods for Somalia's population.

Initially funding would be required to develop the capacity to produce and ensure the programme meets the audience needs but after a period of approximately two years it would be anticipated that the programming would become sustainable through advertising and other donor participation.

