



Developing
Countries
Farm Radio
Network

Network News

FEBRUARY 2003

Building healthier communities — the role of radio



I received package 65 in the mail this October. I explored several themes from your script, "Families benefit when girls go to school." It was broadcast over the airwaves of Radio Lomé last Sunday, December 8th, for the International Children's Day of Broadcasting. Much appreciated.

Radio Lomé – Mr. Amévi Dabla
(TOGO)

Malnutrition and hunger, and their devastating effects on adults and children today — and their hopes for the future — are urgent concerns for all Canadians who care about development. Consider some recent statistics about developing countries:

- 777 million people do not have adequate food
- 30 million underweight infants are born each year due to poor nutrition
- One third of children under 5 are stunted or chronically undernourished — and therefore unlikely to become fully productive adults.

A healthy adult who eats a nutritious diet is likely to be more productive both on the farm and in the labour market than a person who is malnourished. Well-nourished infants and young children grow better, perform better in school, and are less likely to suffer related illnesses or develop chronic diseases as adults.

Rural radio broadcasters have an important role in relaying messages about healthy lifestyles and appropriate diets based on locally grown foods. Studies have clearly shown that radio programs can achieve behavioral changes. This includes programs that promote messages about health. For example, in Kenya, after the AIDS awareness broadcast "The Youth Variety Show", 71% of young people attending the STD clinics said they came after listening to the program.

Last October, in response to the need for nutrition information, we produced and distributed a radio package on Health and Nutrition. Radio programs discussed practical solutions:

- The benefits of traditional foods and home gardens
- Planting a variety of crops for a variety of nutrients
- Safe handling, preparation and storage of food
- The special dietary needs of people living with HIV/AIDS

- Food processing methods to minimize nutrient loss.
- The role of women in ensuring healthy households and well-nourished children

Good health and nutrition are key to food security. But hunger is not a simple problem. The key to ending hunger is in educating those who are hungry to address the root causes. Radio programs broadcast by our partners can empower people and communities to take action that result in not just more food, but also in a more sustainable future — a future where rural people will be well-nourished, and able to lead healthy, and productive lives.

Update

Food crisis in southern Africa

The food crisis in southern Africa has been called an agricultural disaster — the most severe crisis since hunger struck the region in the early 90s. The United Nations estimates that 14.4 million people in Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique, Lesotho and Swaziland are facing severe food shortages as a result of this year's poor harvest.

Several factors contribute to the crisis — drought, flooding, livestock diseases, policy and governance failures, poor farming methods and the increasing rate of HIV/AIDS. But there are ways to address these issues. Our program helps radio broadcasters focus on the crisis at the grassroots level. We have produced scripts about disaster management, climate change and grain storage. We have helped broadcasters build awareness, with local listeners, about livestock health, HIV/AIDS and — this year — living and farming in conflict zones. Our partners get important information to those most in need.

Partner Profile: Masaka Rural Women & Youth Farmers — Uganda



Rosette Mukasa of Masaka Rural Women and Youth Farmers, Uganda

Each week we receive feedback from our partners, telling us how they use our information packages, and providing ideas and comments for future scripts. Here is just one example of a Network partner who uses our material to help local smallholder farmers:

The Masaka Rural Women and Youth Farmers Self-Help Agriculture Development Group, in Uganda, has been a Network partner since 1999. In addition to radio broadcasts about agriculture and health, the group works to involve local people in discussions and organization for rural development. They organize study circles and radio listening groups. They provide training workshops for local women and students. They also regularly

visit farmers in remote rural areas to better understand their needs and ensure that the content of radio programs are relevant to the community.

The Masaka Rural Women & Youth Farmers use our scripts and package materials to develop thoughtful and useful programs for their listeners. They also use our library research services and newsletter resources to connect with organizations doing similar work. For example, they recently developed a partnership with RANET Uganda Program (Radio and Internet, New Information Technologies for Rural Communication) – a project that connects rural communities to environment and weather updates through an internet-radio pathway.

Prince Ismail Nakibinge, the group’s Director, recently wrote:

“We wish to convey to you our sincere and heartfelt thanks for the tireless efforts you have put in assisting Masaka Rural Women and Youth Farmers throughout the year. ... we have been able to mobilise and sensitise people on the importance of getting timely information.”

Thanks to the support of generous donors, our partners can continue to produce radio programs that engage and motivate members in their community to take action and make changes at the local level.



Network volunteer, Elvis Samasuwo and Volunteer Coordinator, Victoria Houston

Volunteer Profile — Elvis Samasuwo

The Network is made up of a diverse group of staff, partners and volunteers. Many help in our Toronto office. One of those volunteers is Elvis Samasuwo. Elvis moved to Canada from Zimbabwe in 2001, and began volunteering at Farm Radio Network only a few months later. Since then, Elvis has been a regular face in the office, helping with our fundraising mailing and preparing our partner packages for distribution.

When asked why he chose to volunteer with the Network, Elvis said, “I was attracted by the fact that you work in partnership with grassroots groups in developing countries. The network of broadcasters makes it possible for the rural poor to share their experiences, and this, in my view, is at the very core of development.”

Elvis has a great understanding of our work, and is particularly interested in rural development issues. Before arriving in Canada, he worked on a project in Zimbabwe to reduce food losses by preserving produce on the farm.

He also sees volunteering as a valuable experience: “It’s an opportunity for me to integrate into the Canadian work environment and is also an opportunity to give back to the community that has welcomed me so well.”

A special thank you to Elvis, and to all our volunteers, who are committed to helping radio broadcasters and farming families throughout the world.

Fundraising update

Our annual fundraising campaign for 2003 is now underway. Your gift is important in helping us reach this year’s campaign goal of \$200,000. Reaching this goal means we can continue to provide broadcast partners with educational scripts, training materials and other services to support healthy rural livelihoods.

Looking back to 2002, we are happy to report that we reached 83% of our goal, from over 2,000 donors. We also had a 10% increase in monthly donors – our Friends of Farmers — who’s regular support helps us make long-term commitments to radio partners.

Thank you for making this work possible!

How partners use our program

Donors often ask us, how do we know our program is working? Our partners tell us. They know what’s needed in their communities – and they know our scripts help:

- Each partner uses, on average, three of four scripts received.
- Our partners translate our material (provided in English, French and Spanish) into many languages and dialects. Survey results reveal that partners in Latin America are most likely to broadcast in one language, while African partners tend to broadcast in multiple languages. Overall, 37% of respondents broadcast in 3 or more languages.
- Scripts on sustainable agriculture, health and the environment are still of greatest interest. When asked to identify other subject areas that they felt were of importance, partners - particularly in Africa and Asia - identified local traditions, indigenous knowledge and natural medicine.
- Three quarters of respondents broadcast farm radio programs weekly; the remaining quarter broadcast daily shows.

Knowing more about our partners and the way they work helps us improve our ability to meet their needs. It also means that they have the opportunity, through their comments, to help determine the content of future scripts and packages.

To keep costs low, we sometimes ask for donation of goods — new or used. Please consider some of our current needs listed on our website (www.farmradio.org). Or contact Flora Hyslop at 416.971.6333.

<p>Contact us at Developing Countries Farm Radio Network 416 Moore Avenue, Suite 101 Toronto, Ontario M4G 1C9 Tel: 416-971-6333 Fax: 416-971-5299 Toll Free: 1-888-773-7717 Email: info@farmradio.org www.farmradio.org Charitable Registration Number (BN) 11888 4808 RR001</p> <p>To increase support for international development, we occasionally exchange our mailing list (name/address only) with other charities. Donors may choose to have their name excluded from this exchange. We respect the right of our donors to limit the solicitations for funds we send. To review your record, please call our office.</p> <p>Program undertaken with the financial support of the Government of Canada provided through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).</p>	<p>Board of Directors Doug Ward <i>President</i> Ray Hazzan <i>Vice-President</i> Jacques Konig <i>Treasurer</i> George Atkins, CM <i>Founding Director</i> Nancy Brown-Anderson Mary Carley Heather Hudson Graham T. McLeod Matthew Mendelsohn Owen Roberts Heidi Schaeffer Keith Smith Wendy Quarry</p>
---	--