NETWORKING TO MEET PARTNERS' NEEDS

DCFRN is trying to increase the number and quality of the *connections* between partners, connections that we hope will meet many needs. The fact that we can make these connections is the result of us all being part of a *network*.

WHAT IS A NETWORK?

The dictionary offers the following meanings (among others):

- *a fabric or structure of cords or wires that cross at regular intervals and are knotted or secured at the crossings;*
- *a usually informally interconnected group or association of persons; and*
- *an interconnected or interrelated chain, group, or system.*

There are various kinds of networks. For example, a *social network* is a social structure made of nodes (generally individuals or organizations) that are tied by one or more specific types of relations such as values, visions, ideas, financial exchange, friendship, kinship, trade, web links, and sexual relations. An *economic network* is defined as a network of independent individuals with the primary purpose of making a strong community in order to gain strength and perform as a significant player in relation to the current market situation.

The effectiveness of a network depends on the engagement and diversity of its members as well as the sharing of a common purpose. In DCFRN's case, we have 300 partners in 39 sub-Saharan African countries, representing community radio, public radio, private radio, NGOs, farmers' associations with a radio show etc. – a richly experienced group with everyone aiming to improve the livelihoods of farmers and rural communities.

DCFRN "does networking" in a lot of different ways; this issue of *Voices* will focus on several ways networking can occur.

Networking to Produce Relevant Radio Scripts

Through face-to-face visits, on-line questionnaires and other means, DCFRN asks its partners what kind of topics should be covered in DCFRN scripts. We also ask partners what script topics they feel capable of writing. We've received a lot of responses to these questions. Six scripts in package #81 represent a matching of partner information needs with partner information capabilities.

Here are a few examples of how this worked: When Vijay visited partner TRALSO in Mthata, South Africa, TRALSO identified their wish to see scripts on gender and HIV/AIDS. Through our on-line questionnaire last November, Gladson Makowa of the Story Workshop in Malawi indicated that he had expertise in writing scripts on this topic. Vijay's job was simply to commission Gladson to write the script. Thus we have package 81, script #7.

Through the package 78 on-line questionnaire, Kachwekano Community Multimedia Center in Uganda indicated their desire to see scripts focusing on the environment. In the same survey, Kwabena Agyei of Classic FM in Ghana indicated his ability to write scripts on environmental themes. Again, Vijay's job was simply to "connect the dots."

Three stations responded to our on-line questionnaire by indicating their desire for DCFRN scripts on food preservation. Radio MECAP in Togo, having produced a script on a similar topic for package 78, was approached and agreed to write script #9.

When Vijay visited Valley FM in Worcester, South Africa last August, station manager Francois Marais indicated the station's wish to see scripts on farm labourers' rights. As there was no obvious match and because Valley FM currently airs a program on labour issues, the station was invited to contribute the script. Thus, script #5 was born.

ICTs and Networking

Information and Communication technologies (ICTs) such as e-mail and the Internet make networking easier for those who have access to the technologies. Because DCFRN staff cannot visit all partners, we need to rely on other feedback mechanisms for ideas on script topics and to receive partners' insights into ways of improving *Voices* (see article on *Partner Insight Into Improving Voices*). Electronic tools such as e-mail questionnaires are faster and cheaper than relying on post.

In this issue, the article on DCFRN's pilot study AGRIGORA highlights how the Internet can be used to network and exchange ideas amongst partners. The Panos Institute of West Africa is interested in bringing together a network of West African broadcasters and organizations to use the Internet for exchanging programs on different topics. The article entitled *Panos Meeting in Ouagadougou* describes how communication practitioners met and brainstormed on practical ways to achieve this program exchange.

If you have any ideas on how DCFRN could improve its networking, please let us know and we will publish your ideas in the next issue of *Voices*.

THE G8 SUMMIT THROUGH THE EYES OF A UGANDAN JOURNALIST

by Collins Vumiria, Radio West, Mbarara, Uganda

PHOTO: Collins Vumiria – Chief News Editor of Radio West in Mbarara, Uganda.

I traveled to Germany from June 2nd to 10th to cover the G8 summit, a journey sponsored by Panos London, through Panos Eastern Africa.

As an African journalist, and a Ugandan one at that, I was amused at how peaceful German police can be even when visibly angered by protestors. Use of water cannons? This was my first shock. I thought to myself, "In my country, police tanks filled with tear gas and army trucks would be making the rounds of the city chasing even a crawling baby!"

Then there were the 9000 protestors who were against the G8 because eight leaders should not discuss issues on behalf of six billion people. I thought, "Hmmm!! These guys are probably sitting down to see how to help Africa overcome poverty!" But there was a grain of truth in the protestors' cause, even though they looked like picnic goers. "The rich nations are exploiting Africa's raw materials. So they should give aid money, because it is a give and take game," one told me.

Want to hear another thing that puzzled me? It was the handful of African journalists covering the summit. Myself, together with eight others had traveled courtesy of Panos. My worry is that we were too few. Were the nine of us going to traverse the entire African continent reporting what had transpired at the G8? The conduits, the journalists were few indeed. But luckily for my area, at least 17 million listeners of Radio West were able not only to hear what happened clearly, but to hear it in their own vernacular.

For archived reports from African broadcasters at the G8 please visit the following link
http://panos.blogs.com/africavox2007/summary_of_g8_coverage.html

**Collins Vumiria wrote Script 6 on banana bacterial wilt in this package.

STAY TUNED FOR...

Package 82 (November 2007) will focus on issues of gender and health. Some of the planned scripts will look at the relationship between violence against women and the spread of HIV and AIDS, talk about maternal and child depression, consider appropriate farming tools for women, and look at alternatives to widow-cleansing and female genital cutting practices.

Send Us Your Current Email Address

If you haven't received any emails from DCFRN over the past year, it means we do not have your correct email address! We use email to notify partners about new script packages that have been posted on **www.farmradio.org**, to send out questionnaires for evaluating the packages and to notify partners of information and activities that might interest them in addition to what appears in *Voices*. Please note that we will continue to post our script packages to all partners who want a hard copy.

Please send your email address to Blythe McKay at **bmckay@farmradio.org**.

PARTNER INSIGHT INTO IMPROVING "VOICES"

Over the past six months many DCFRN partners have explained how the *Voices* newsletter can be improved. We appreciate the thoughtful feedback and will do our best to respond to some of the suggestions.

Partners' Suggestions

Overwhelmingly, our readers have indicated that they want more information about partners who belong to the network – contact information and websites, activities the stations/ organizations are carrying out, sharing and exchanging ideas based on local experience. People also felt strongly that partners should contribute more of the articles in *Voices*. One respondent felt that this would increase the sense of belonging to the network and the interest people have in it.

It was also suggested that it is important for partners to provide feedback publicly by having a page for partner comments in *Voices*. Partners explained that the use of surveys or questionnaires is a good way for DCFRN to receive suggestions for improving the newsletter.

Another idea was that partners be informed about topics to be discussed in the next *Voices*, so that they could submit articles on those themes.

Respondents also proposed several topics for upcoming issues of *Voices*: information from farmers about participatory adaptive research, articles on upcoming regional workshops, a corner for special tips on agricultural topics and home economics, a guide to facilitating meetings with farmers, more information about training opportunities for African broadcasters, and information about ways to fund radio stations. Other respondents indicated that *Voices* should contain more information and be produced more than three times a year.

DCFRN Action

In this issue you will find a new section entitled 'Stay Tuned For…' (see page 2), which will indicate what topics will be covered in the upcoming script package. We are always happy to include information about partners in *Voices* and encourage you to submit anything you think other partners might find of interest. Articles for *Voices* are written on a volunteer basis; we appreciate the time partners dedicate to writing articles for it. In our next *Voices* (#82) we plan to add a "letters to *Voices*" section featuring comments from readers on this issue of *Voices*. If you have any comments on this issue please send them to **bmckay@farmradio.org**.

WELCOME NEW PARTNERS!

- **Horizon FM** – a community radio station in Niamey, Niger
- **MEROU** – an NGO in Kinshasa, DRC, that uses media to fight HIV/AIDS and promote development
- **Radio Valco** – a community radio station that is part of the University of Cape Coast, Ghana
- **Dallol FM "La Voix de l'Aréwa"** – a commercial radio station in Niamey, Niger
- **Lebialem Community Radio Council (LCRC)** – a community radio station in South West Cameroon
- **Radio Notre Dame de la Réconciliation** – a religious radio station focused on development in Koudougou, Burkina Faso

- **Radio Peace** – a community radio station in Liberia
- **FM Awagna 99.4** – a community radio station in the Casamance region of southern Senegal
- **Radio-Bo (Kiss 104 FM)** – a commercial radio station in Freetown, Sierra Leone
- **Radio Oxy-jeunes** – a community radio station based in Dakar, Senegal
- **Radio Galho FM / la voix du producteur agricole** – a community radio station and farmers' association in the Ivory Coast

PHOTO: Ababacar Ly – Station Coordinator of Radio Oxyjeunes in Senegal.

FARM RADIO WEEKLY AND AGRIGORA
PILOT STUDY

FARM RADIO WEEKLY

From April 23 to May 21, 2007, DCFRN carried out a pilot study with several English-speaking partners to test out Farm Radio Weekly (FRW). FRW is a weekly electronic compilation of news and information about agriculture and other topics of interest to the listeners of African rural radio broadcasters. FRW:

• Provides a weekly synopsis of relevant agricultural and rural news collected from a variety of international and African sources. The news is provided in a format that is interesting, user-friendly, timely, accurate, and consistent with high journalistic standards.

• Provides information about how to adapt the new information into programs as well as provides links to archived DCFRN scripts that are relevant to current events and issues

• Shares information about training opportunities and forthcoming events of interest to broadcasters

• Provides links to relevant websites and information on best practices from other stations

To see an archived version of the five FRW newsletters produced during the pilot study please visit the following website **http://agrigora.surfacescan.com/taxonomy/term/37**.

The active pilot group included 20 broadcasters and broadcast organizations from Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Zimbabwe and Zambia.

After the final issue, broadcasters were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with FRW. The average rating was 8.2 out of 10. The reasons sighted for the ratings included:

• "The quality of resources in resource bank, the opportunity to share and network given by the network actions and agrigora and the news story with tips to broadcasters are really appreciated."

• "This has become my number 1 source of agriculture information for my farmers' programmes in past few weeks. It has been a more reliable source than any other."

• "If the newsletter continues then it will be resourceful and educative."

DCFRN is planning to launch a pilot study with its French-speaking radio partners in the near future and given the success of the English FRW pilot study is hoping to roll-out a continuous English FRW.

References
Schaeffer, H. (2007). Draft Farm Radio Weekly Pilot Report.

AGRIGORA

AGRIGORA is a new website that DCFRN developed and pilot tested with a select number of DCFRN partners involved in the FRW pilot study. In its pilot form, AGRIGORA provided a number of on-line services to broadcasters, including constant RSS feeds (see ICT definition section on p.5) of news items of relevance to African farmers, discussion forums on topics of the participants' choice, and archived issues of Farm Radio Weekly. The broadcasters that used AGRIGORA welcomed it as an important new tool. Here is a comment from one of the users: *"This is one of the most exciting moments of my career having a network where I can interact with you all especially on agriculture related issues. What an achievement".* Machrine Birungi, media trainer with Uganda Radio Network.

AGRIGORA has been designed to provide broadcasters with a Web 2.0 platform (see ICT definition section on p.5) for collaboration and networking. DCFRN is currently exploring ways to provide tools for collaborative script development by sharing audio clips and using wikis (see ICT definition section on p.5).

To visit AGRIGORA go to **http://agrigora.surfacescan.com**. At the moment the site is inactive because the pilot study is over. However, DCFRN hopes to launch AGRIGORA for all its partners sometime in the near future.

Here is an excerpt from a discussion on AGRIGORA about environmental destruction that took place between two DCFRN partners – Adrian Tumbewaze from Kachwekano Community Multi-Media Center/ Kachwekano FM 103.7 in Uganda and Alice Lungu Banda from Palisah News Agency in Zambia.

Dear all,

I felt it would be important if we discussed environmental issues that are leading to its destruction.

I must tell you that the area where I live the environment is being destroyed every other minute and no big actions are being taken.

The area where I live for example is facing it greatly when you look at how people are burning all the trees just in the name of charcoal burning and yet not being checked by the government.

Take another example where our mother forest Mabira is being given to investors, something that has led to demonstrations in the city leading to loss of both life and property.

When you visit Uganda today you find it a different place Polythene bags are here and there – something that has become a danger to both animals that eat them and denying the soils from getting the water that they need.

What do you say about the same fellow broadcasters?

Adrian, waiting to see your reply.

Hi Adrian, nice to meet you thanks to the organisers.

You see Adrian, this problem is there in most African countries. In Zambia charcoal burning is a big business and men have educated their children, received health care, built houses and achieved a lot with the money they get from Charcoal burning. Our governments know that they have not provided means of survival for their people that is why they do not check or protect trees that are getting cut and burnt every minute as you put it. Here in Zambia, someone in the rural area would want to do something decent like farming and earn a living, but check the input prices and production costs, Very expensive, Ok he may try harder and grow something but when the time comes to sell his crops the prices at which the government buys the crop is very low such that one ends up making losses instead of profits. (This year's flow price for maize is the same as last year's meanwhile the price of fertilizers was increased at the time of planting.) That is why many people especially in rural areas resort to charcoal burning overlooking the problems that come along with it. God help our Governments to put their priorities right. Thanks.

Alice

If you are interested in learning more about these new technologies and how they might assist you in your work you can visit the following website **http://www.web2fordev.net/** to learn about the

CONFERENCE ON PARTICIPATORY WEB FOR DEVELOPMENT

from **25-27 September 2007** – FAO headquarters, Rome.

The Web2forDev 2007 is the first international conference to discuss how new Internet tools commonly known as Web 2.0 can be used to the advantage of Southern actors to more efficiently network, collaborate and exchange information in the field of rural and agricultural development and natural resource management.

Definitions of ICT terms

RSS feeds: RSS stands for really simple syndication. An "RSS feed' gathers updated information from websites and puts them in a central location to facilitate access. For instance on the AGRIGORA site you will see updated news items from a variety of news sources pulled from different websites. RSS updates the items automatically which saves time because it prevents someone from having to visit many different sites on a repeated basis to see if information was updated.

Web 2.0: refers to using the Internet to collaborate and coproduce information. Examples of Web 2.0 applications are Internet discussion forums or wikis.

Wiki: A wiki is a web application designed to allow multiple authors to add, remove, and edit content. (The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition, On Term: "Wiki".)
A good example of a wiki is the Internet site Wikipedia **http://wikipedia.org/** which is a multilingual, web-based, free content encyclopedia project. Wikipedia is written collaboratively by volunteers from all around the world.

Introducing AFRRI – The African Farm Radio Research Initiative

Developing Countries Farm Radio Network (DCFRN) is pleased to announce the start of AFRRI, The African Farm Radio Research Initiative. AFRRI is being funded by a $4 million U.S. grant to World University Service of Canada from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. DCFRN, in partnership with WUSC, will implement AFRRI over a 42-month period.

AFRRI will gather, implement, evaluate and share best practices for using radio-based communication strategies to enhance food security in rural Africa. It will also offer capacity-building and training services for radio broadcasters so they can improve their programming for rural listeners.

While new technologies, from wireless devices to high-speed Internet seem to be everywhere these days, radio is still the best communication tool for reaching the rural poor, particularly in Africa. Radio is popular, reaches a wide audience, is affordable and accessible. Farmers listen to local news, stories, and music in their own language without needing to be able to read English or French. Over the last decade, there has been an explosion in the number of radio stations across Africa – particularly community and commercial FM stations. New techniques such as phone-in shows, live community forums, and radio diaries are making radio an interactive medium, providing farmers with a real voice.

Clearly, radio has many benefits and presents many opportunities. But, how do African farmers use the information they hear on the radio? What information is most useful? What format is best able to engage and empower farmers? How can radio stations make use of cheap and accessible mobile phones, MP3 players, and other communication technologies to extend their reach and improve interaction with listeners? This project will provide some of the answers.

AFRRI will be implemented in Mali, Ghana, Malawi, Uganda and Tanzania. In each country, advisory committees representing farmers' organizations, radio stations, research organizations, government extension agencies and other stakeholders will come together to develop detailed action research plans. As part of the action research plans, partner radio stations will produce and broadcast a variety of innovative radio campaigns with, and for farmers that address food security priorities. By comparing farmers' knowledge and farming practices before and after the programs are broadcast, AFRRI will discover how radio along with mobile phones and other communication technologies can best be used to help smallholder farmers meet their food security objectives.

The lessons learned from the five countries involved in AFRRI will be shared with all DCFRN partners across sub-Saharan Africa in a variety of formats including articles in *Voices*, scripts and e-bulletins.

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RADIO FOR DEVELOPMENT NEWS

PANOS MEETING IN OUAGADOUGOU:
EXCHANGING RADIO PROGRAMS ACROSS WEST AFRICA

PHOTO: Emmanuel Johnson, Station Manager of Radio Peace in Liberia, interviews Blythe McKay of Developing Countries Farm Radio Network at the Panos meeting in Ouagadougou.
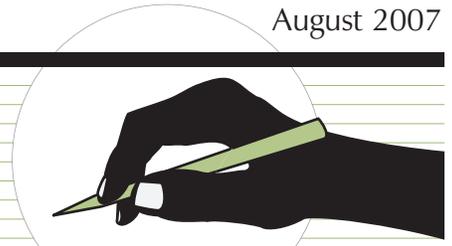
On June 11 and 12, communication practitioners including radio broadcasters from many West African countries, NGOs, Network organizations such as DCFRN, OneWorld Africa, West Africa Democracy Radio (WADR) and ReR (African Network of Rural and Local Radios), and content producers such as CTA, met in Ouagadougou to participate in a workshop entitled *"The Role of ICT in Regional Exchange and Local Dissemination of Radio Programs: Toward a Hub?".* The Panos Institute of West Africa funded and facilitated the event which aimed to produce a concrete way forward for broadcasters in West Africa to share programs of relevance to listeners within the region.

During the two days, participants brainstormed on three main questions:

1. **What interest exists to produce and disseminate regionally relevant information?**

2. **Using technology, how can locally produced programs be exchanged within a region?**

3. **What means are needed to ensure regional program exchange and dissemination?**

Conference Conclusions and Recommendations: The Way Forward

- There is interest in having a West African regional exchange of radio programs on different themes such as conflict, human rights, agriculture and rural development amongst others.

- One of the challenges that will need to be overcome is the diversity of languages used in West Africa particularly given that most radio stations produce programs in local languages. It was discussed that programs exchanged should either be produced in English or French, or if they are produced in a local language they should be accompanied by a transcript in English or French.

- The programs exchanged should use written and audio formats.

- For the program exchange to succeed it will require regional cooperation with a focus on transborder issues.

- There is a need to anticipate technology changes so as not to be left behind. Several radio broadcasters indicated that in a few years time the tape cassette could be obsolete as stations are transitioning to digital production.

- It was agreed by participants that The Panos Institute of West Africa should lead the creation of a web-based regional platform with other institutions helping to facilitate such as DCFRN, OneWorld Africa, ReR, CTA, and WADR.

- At the national level programs may need to be exchanged using other means than Internet where connectivity is limited. It was suggested that in each country there should be a national hub which will help disseminate programs from the web-platform to stations in more remote areas of the country and vice versa. It was recommended that there should be a pilot project in one country to test out the effectiveness of the regional program exchange.

- To support the creation of the platform it will be necessary to have documentation about how radio broadcasters access information and programs.

- Once the platform is created training will be required to ensure people can participate in exchanging programs.

- The platform should put an emphasis on co-production of programs between radio broadcasters and institutions within West Africa.

SCRIPTWRITING WORKSHOP:
SCALING–UP LOCAL AGRICULTURAL INNOVATIONS

By Félix Houinsou

Producing radio scripts in order to share information about local agricultural innovations was the main aim of a training workshop that took place on April 20, 2007 at the Africa Rice Center (WARDA) in Benin.

With support from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the project *"Participatory Adaptive Research and Dissemination of Rice Technologies (PADS)"* aims to make rice research and development more client-responsive and is based on a participatory learning and action-research approach. One project activity was a competition of local agricultural innovations from Gambia, Ghana, Guinea and Mali. An international jury selected the top three innovations from each country in terms of sustainability and scaling-up potential. Participants from each of the countries then learnt how to turn these winning stories into radio scripts during a one-day scriptwriting workshop.

Using tools provided by Developing Countries Farm Radio Network, Mr. Félix Houinsou, the workshop facilitator and media expert from the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), helped participants develop their scriptwriting skills. The participants promised to use their new knowledge to develop radio scripts based on their local agricultural innovations.

Scripts 1-4 in this package share several of the winning local agricultural innovations.

PHOTO: *Hyptis spicigera* – a plant used in seed conservation in Mali.