

## Radio programs contribute to daily survival in rural communities affected by HIV/AIDS

By Vijay Cuddeford

HIV/AIDS is much more than a health problem in rural communities. Because it kills or weakens adults in the prime of their working life, it also has a severe impact on farming and food security. This is an important consideration if you are going to provide useful programming to rural audiences.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, 7 million agricultural workers have already died from AIDS-related illnesses. Before the year 2020, it is estimated that at least 16 million more will die. Death and illness challenge a family's capacity to feed itself. HIV/AIDS is changing farming and rural environments, and stressing the social structure and bonds of rural communities. The impact of the disease comes at a time when many rural people are already having difficulty coping with drought, low crop prices, and climate change. Healthy adults, especially women, must care for the sick, attend to farm chores and household work, and grieve for the dead. With so many people sick and dying, the amount of labour available to a household is reduced and the labour-intensive traditional farming practices used in many areas are particularly vulnerable.

The impacts on rural households and agricultural productivity are profound and complex. They include:

- Less time for agricultural and household activities, especially labour-intensive tasks such as weeding, ploughing, harvesting, and water and fuel collection.
- Interruption of farm work after a death. While in mourning, many communities do not do farm work for a period of time, often several days.



- The loss of traditional agricultural knowledge and other skills as experienced farmers die.
- Less cash to buy goods which cannot be produced on the farm, such as soap and cooking oil.
- Less money for school fees and medicine.

- The removal of children from school, especially girls, to help with chores.
- The sale of household assets such as agricultural tools, livestock, bicycles, and radios, often at very low cost, to pay for medicines and funerals.
- A reduction in the quantity and quality of meals, leading to malnutrition, decreased immunity to general infection, and increased child mortality.
- An increase in women's work load. Women must care for children and sick relatives, grieve for the dead, care for children, and do the bulk of the farm work.
- Reduced access to credit and support from extension workers, after the male head of the household dies.
- Neglect of livestock, resulting in thefts and diseases, and depriving the family of milk and other animal foods.
- Exhaustion of extended village and community support mechanisms. As productive adults die, social networks, once the foundation of communities, are shattered.

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## Radio programs ... (cont from page 1)

- Disinheritance of widows after their husbands die, and exclusion from wider kinship networks.

Rural radio stations can broadcast ideas and information about ways of coping with these impacts. As we've seen, HIV/AIDS limits the availability of labour. People need information about how to produce more food in less time with fewer resources. Radio programs about labour-saving practices, appropriate technologies, and communal action will help. Whenever possible, demonstrate strategies that are based on current or traditional practices in the listening area.

### Labour-saving practices

Many valuable strategies to help rural people cope with the impact of HIV/AIDS focus on alternative cropping, raising livestock, or innovative tools which save farmers time. However, it's important to ensure that these practices also maintain yields and provide a nutritious diet. Examples include the use of:

- Labour-saving devices such as threshing machines, mills, well pulleys, lighter ploughs and hoes.
- Zero or minimum tillage to reduce weeding time.
- Intercropping and mulching to reduce weeding time.
- Early maturing, disease- and drought-resistant crop varieties.
- High-protein fodder trees and shrubs to reduce feed costs.
- Multipurpose carts made of cheaper construction material, for carrying water and other inputs.
- Raising small stock such as poultry, rabbits, bees, sheep and goats. Small stock take less time to raise, reducing spoilage and need for long-term preservation.

Poultry and rabbits reproduce quickly, thus providing a steady supply of protein. They can also be housed on small pieces of land, and require small amounts of feed and water.

(Note: Item number 6 in package 62 suggests the use of various labour-saving technologies by a women's support group.)

### More efficient use of on-farm resources

Another category of useful strategies to integrate into radio broadcasts is the practice of recycling on-farm resources, to reduce the need for purchased inputs. For example farmers can:

- Feed crop residues to livestock, reducing the need for pasturing or herding.
- Use manure to fertilize crops; manure can also be used to produce biogas fuel.
- Use more compost and organic fertilizers.
- Plant live fences to supply firewood, fodder and fruits.
- Intercrop cereals with legumes to provide nitrogen and smother weeds.

### Community action

Finally, consider radio programs that highlight activities that communities can undertake together. For example:

- Community work forces, labour sharing clubs, and collective production of food crops.
- Revival of indigenous social safety nets such as "zunde ramambo" (or "chief's granary") in Zimbabwe. In zunde ramambo, the chief sets aside a plot of land and the community provides labour. The produce generated is given to the



## Q & A

Do you need more information to prepare your radio programs? The Farm Radio Network library staff can provide you with that information or answer questions from farmers in your audience. Send us your request by e-mail ([library@farmradio.org](mailto:library@farmradio.org)), mail, or fax, giving as much detail as possible. Knowing how the information will be used, and when you need it, helps us target materials to match your needs. Examples of questions we receive are:

- ❏ How can I control whitefly cheaply and safely?
- ❏ What other bee products, besides honey, could we market?
- ❏ Where can I find radio programs on dealing with family violence?



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most vulnerable households. (See script 7 in package 62.)

- Community-based child care to free women to work in or outside the home.
- Community-run micro-enterprises and income-generating projects to produce food and cash.

The impact of HIV/AIDS goes far beyond individual or communal health issues. People in rural communities need information about basic survival. Broadcasters can investigate successful strategies for coping with the loss of labour, and the resulting loss of food production, and present them in a variety of formats.



# 23 steps to successful radio programs on HIV/AIDS prevention and awareness



By Iain McLellan

Producing radio about HIV/AIDS is a tricky business due to, among other factors, the nature and severity of the illness, its broad impact, and various cultural sensitivities about discussing human sexuality. Iain McLellan, is a consultant specializing in communication for changing HIV/AIDS behaviour. He offers the following suggestions to help meet the challenge of creating effective programs.

**Get support from upper management.** Explain to supervisors that radio programming can save people's lives, that there has never been a challenge like HIV before, and that no country can afford to ignore it.

**Seek background information and expertise from health professionals.** The more informed you are, the more useful your broadcasts will be.

**Make contact with international organizations and NGOs that support HIV projects.** It is often easier for donors to add a radio component onto existing projects rather than get new ones approved. Forming partnerships with existing projects also speeds up the process of getting support.

**Don't try to be all things to all people.** Target broadcasts to specific populations. Youth for example can be divided into boys and girls, sexually active and not sexually active, in-school and out-of-school. It is impossible to talk to parents and youth in the same program.

**Information about HIV/AIDS alone is not enough.** People already know how infection occurs and how to prevent infection. What is needed are subtle approaches that persuade them to practise safe sex. For example, people cannot be told to use condoms; it is better if they hear dramatizations that model the advantages and disadvantages of using condoms. Then they can decide for themselves.

**Avoid too much technical information.** Don't allow invited health professionals to go into a lot of detail about bio-medical issues using language which goes over the

heads of listeners and tends to be boring. Instead, deal with the more important issues of human sexuality. Discussing realities on the air such as sexual activity of youth, prostitution (commercial sex work), and sexually transmitted infections, may make people feel uncomfortable, but it is essential.

**Whenever possible involve people living with HIV/AIDS in broadcasts.** There is no better way to bring home the realities of this disease than to get the testimony of those who have been touched by it. Health personnel can help identify and encourage people to collaborate. Withhold their identity if they prefer to remain anonymous.

**Be bold in taking risks and pushing limits.** There is a natural shyness when it comes to talking about sexual relations. But it is impossible to deal effectively with HIV/AIDS without discussing sex openly and frankly. Broadcasters might take a little heat, but they have to be convinced that what they are doing is for the good of the country and is saving lives. There are too many countries in the world where a conspiracy of silence has allowed HIV to infect and kill millions, and impact on every aspect of human life.

**Get copies of socio-behavioural studies.** Gaining insights on what is really happening in terms of risky sexual behaviour helps to make sure programming reflects what is really going on. It is also easier to quote serious studies describing behaviour rather than make assumptions about it.

**Engage the services of drama and theatre groups to develop dramatizations on HIV/AIDS topics.** First though, get technical advice from a health professional to ensure that no misinformation is conveyed. Dramatizations are most effective when they are followed by a discussion or a call-in show. Controlled improvisation which is developed over time, and pre-recorded and edited, is a good approach. Improvisation is often more lively and authentic than scripted dramas. Role-playing is another method commonly used. It involves assigning people from the target population situations to act out which are later discussed.

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**Involve youth.** Youth is one of the hardest groups to reach. No one can communicate with youth better than youth itself. Give young people basic radio production skills and encourage them to develop their own HIV/AIDS programming. The resulting programs will be more interesting and attractive to youth.

**Involve adult gatekeepers when you develop programs for youth.** Form an advisory committee of parents and community leaders, including religious leaders. This will reduce the chances of strong opposition to the programs. Stress to the committee that the goal of the programs is to protect those who are sexually active and discourage those who are not sexually active from starting.

**Promote abstinence from sexual activity for girls who have never engaged in sexual relations.** It is much easier to maintain a positive behaviour than to change a risky one. For example, encourage girls who are 12 to 15 years old, to say no to sex and understand they have the right to control their bodies and have sex only when they want to.

**Collaborate with condom social marketing projects whenever possible.** Ask them to sponsor the production of HIV/AIDS programming and involve them in off air promotions such as concerts, fairs, or other community events. Condoms are the heart and soul of HIV prevention. It is much easier to get people who engage in risky behaviour to use condoms than to end the risky behaviour. The reliability of condoms needs to be emphasized, as well as instructions on how to use them.

**Make programs entertaining.** HIV is not a medical issue; it is a socio-behavioural one. HIV invokes a whole range of human emotions that should be reflected in programming. Dramas, role-playing, music and personal testimony bring life to coverage.

**Use humour to diffuse discomfort about sexual issues.** There is something about condoms and human sexuality that often brings out a giggle from people. People usually find it easier to talk about sex when they are laughing about it at the same time. It also makes for more enjoyable, entertaining programming.

**Respond immediately to misinformation.** Any rumours such as exaggerated claims of cures or false facts about condom reliability should be addressed. Get health professionals, condom social marketers or others to present the scientific reality.

**Sustain HIV/AIDS programming over time.** It is fine to take breaks now and again to prevent listeners from becoming saturated or overwhelmed. If HIV/AIDS is not covered frequently, listeners will tend to forget about it and return to risky behaviour.

**Appreciate that HIV is not just another health problem.** Think of HIV as a national security challenge. It has the potential to affect every aspect of life in a country. Radio broadcasters have a civic responsibility to ensure that radio is used effectively to reduce HIV infection and diminish its impact.

**Make sure HIV programming is heard.** Broadcast at times and days when target populations are likely to be listening, and repeat broadcasts at different times and different days. Find out the best times and days to reach people by conducting small-scale research.

**Do as much recording on location as possible.** Visit secondary schools, bars and night clubs, Sexually Transmitted Infection clinics and other locations where those who might be at risk to infection might be found, and interview them about sexual behaviour and their ideas about prevention. This approach personalizes the issues making them more interesting for listeners than studio interviews. People are often more frank and open when interviewed outside the studio.

**Work with local language broadcasters to develop suitable vocabulary.** Broadcasts on HIV are too often done in European languages that are often not understood by listeners. Develop a vocabulary in local languages which covers commonly used words like STIs, condoms, sexual relations, etc. A balance should be achieved to ensure that the words are well understood but are not too vulgar and offensive.

**It is not always necessary to mention HIV or AIDS in order to promote prevention.** Some listeners are tired of hearing about HIV and AIDS. Others deny that it is a problem. This is especially true if the number of infected people is relatively low. In these cases, don't refer to HIV and AIDS at all. Instead promote condom use to avoid Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) which can cause infertility and unwanted pregnancy. Rapid diagnosis and treatment of STIs of all sexual partners at reliable facilities can also be promoted. Both strategies also contribute to reducing HIV infection.

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# South African Community Radio AIDS Network

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In July 2000, after receiving training on HIV/AIDS and other related health issues, community radio producers from member stations of South Africa's National Community Radio Forum (NCRF) felt that they needed to play an active role in fighting the pandemic. South Africa and other countries in

the southern African region have some of the highest levels of HIV infection in the world. And so, the South African Community Radio HIV/AIDS Network was born. The station producers committed to increasing production of HIV/AIDS programming, as well as sharing their script and audio programming with each other via fax, cassette exchange, and e-mail where possible.

The stations, through their producers, are the 'owners' of the Network. It is up to them to make it happen. The NCRF, as the umbrella body for community radio stations in South Africa, supports the producers by coordinating the network's partnerships for programming and training. There are currently 12 station producers participating in the Network, and it is hoped that the network will grow as more content gets produced. The central principle of this network is active participation; there are no recipients who do not provide content.

Only half of network members have e-mail access, but the NCRF is working with a local donor agency to try to get the necessary infrastructure (i.e., computers and modems) in place at all participating stations. Once everyone is connected, scripts and audio can be exchanged more easily. Audio files can be sent as e-mail attachments or be uploaded and downloaded from a web site. But the key is the programming. Only when a critical mass of scripts and audio packages is being produced can the e-mail/Internet element be compelling. The NCRF coordinates training workshops on both program content and new Information and Communication Technologies, often in conjunction with local organizations such as South Africa's Medical Research Council (MRC), the South African National Editors Forum, and SANGONet, an NGO Internet training provider.

As an organization that strives for the development of the community radio sector and broader civil society, the NCRF encourages producers to do programming together with local clinics, schools, NGOs, CBOs, youth clubs, women, and local branches of the South African National Association of People With HIV/AIDS (NAPWA). The establishment of the SA Community Radio AIDS Network was an accomplishment rather than a surprise, as there has been much talk about the importance of networking among community radio stations in South Africa. It was a dream the sector strived for, but it is now a reality!

*Note: Two scripts in Farm Radio Network package 62 ('Misconceptions and Acceptance' and 'Anyone can get HIV/AIDS') were written and produced by members of the AIDS Network. For more information about the South Africa Community Radio AIDS Network, please contact: National Community Radio Forum, Suite 109, Private Bag X42, Braamfontein 2017, South Africa. E-mail: [ncrf@ncrf.org.za](mailto:ncrf@ncrf.org.za), [www.ncrf.org.za](http://www.ncrf.org.za)*

## Website update

**We're making changes to [www.farmradio.org](http://www.farmradio.org)**



If you've logged on lately, you'll notice we've changed the **What's New** section; added more partner news, new publications, and information about conferences and workshops. Use the **Post-It** form to add *your* news (e.g., describe a new project you're undertaking or programming you've developed, suggest information resources you have found valuable, give us feedback on Farm Radio scripts or let us know how you've used them). For our Spanish speaking partners, although our site is not trilingual yet, please continue to post your news in Spanish and we will post it along with an English abstract.

We have also added a search engine to the site. Enter a word or phrase to search the whole website (including the full-text of scripts). We continue to add earlier scripts to give you access to the complete collection.

We're still working on changes to make this a more useful tool. We're grateful for the help of WebNetworks and our wonderful volunteers, Anca and Ying.

Your suggestions are most welcome!



## Our partners are the strength of the Network



Thanks to all of you who participated in our most recent survey. The information you provided will help shape our partner program. Surveys were sent out to about 400 radio broadcasters, and we received 76 replies (18% response rate). The response rate was highest amongst our partners in Africa.

Based on your responses, we have updated estimates of the number of people in rural communities who can access information through our Network. Those estimates are:

- ⊙ In Africa: 324 million people
- ⊙ In South and South-east Asia: 100 million people
- ⊙ In Latin America: 60 million people

This means that in total, our partners have the potential to reach almost 500 million people! And, they reach people in their own languages. In Africa, we know that our partners broadcast in more than 100 languages. Globally, the radio scripts we send to our partners are adapted in more than 200 languages!

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations estimates that 500 million small farmers produce most of the

developing world's food. Are these the 500 million people that you, our partners, reach? Are these people getting the information they need from you? Are you getting the information you need from us? We hope to answer these questions based on your feedback on our next survey. If you use our scripts for radio broadcasts, you will have received a survey and renewal form in this (January 2002) package. Please complete it and return it to us by March 31, 2002 to ensure that you continue to receive our scripts, newsletters and other services — and to ensure that we consider your needs as we plan our program.

Many of the partners who responded to our survey said they would like to receive our packages by e-mail. In Africa, 10% chose e-mail. In Latin America, 33% prefer e-mail. **This service is now available.** It ensures prompt delivery of our packages to you, and it helps us reduce our printing and distribution costs so that we can invest more in partner services. If you would like to receive materials by e-mail, please send a note to Claudio Ruiz, Program Assistant, at [cruiz@farmradio.org](mailto:cruiz@farmradio.org)



*Supporting  
broadcasters to  
strengthen small-  
scale farmers and  
rural life*

**Voices** (ISSN: 1186-7841) is published quarterly by Developing Countries Farm Radio Network. We welcome your comments and contributions. Please address all correspondence to Fran Brendon, Editor, **Voices**, at Developing Countries Farm Radio Network.

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Program undertaken with the financial support of the Government of Canada through the **Canadian International Development Agency**

## An opportunity to broadcast to the entire African continent

The Network recently signed an agreement with the non-profit organization WorldSpace to distribute Farm Radio scripts in English and French over the AfriStar satellite. Community radio stations throughout Africa and the Middle East with the receiver can access these scripts via the free WSF-Multimedia Service.



Partners can now add their content to WorldSpace's audio channels, Africa Learning Channel (ALC) and Canal EF, which have

been created as information outlets for community broadcasters, grassroots organizations, and NGOs.

Over 6 million people in 50 African countries currently have access to the ALC. Programs are transmitted in whole, or as part of hour-long topical magazine programs. The focus is on HIV/AIDS education and social development topics, including democracy, conflict resolution, food security, nutrition, gender equality, microenterprise, environment and conservation. ALC is looking for

interviews, dramas, speeches, news, features or public service announcements, and will accept the material in any format — cassettes, reel-to-reel, online, CD's, and MP3.

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