

# VOICES

SHARING IDEAS, GROWING SOLUTIONS.



The newsletter for  
partners of  
Developing  
Countries Farm  
Radio Network

July 2002, No. 64

## Radio: a tool for disaster prevention and recovery

Your listeners may be at great risk to the effects of natural disasters. If they are in poor rural areas, they are more likely to be affected.

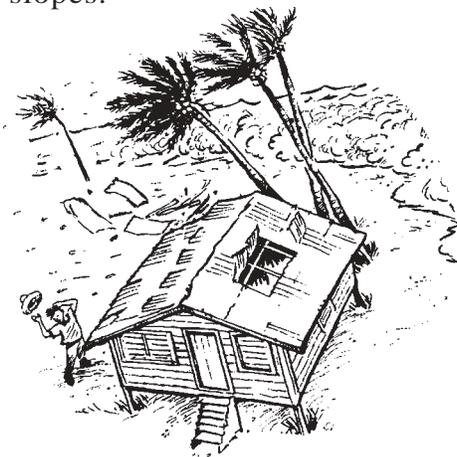
Drought, floods, cyclones, hurricanes, earthquakes – these natural disasters can strike anywhere. But they disproportionately affect the poor. More than 90 per cent of disaster related deaths occur in developing countries. A single disaster can wipe out years of economic development.

In the 1990s, almost two billion people were affected by natural disasters – immediately afterward, and for the long-term. Disasters weaken public services such as health, water and sanitation. And the damage is escalating, because people don't have coping strategies, and are losing the tools that protected them in the past.

What can you tell your listeners about preparing for and coping with natural disasters?

The example of Hurricane Mitch, which affected millions of people in Central America, killed more than 13,000 people, and caused about US\$30 billion in economic losses, provides many lessons for us – and for your listeners.

Much of the damage of the hurricane was related to poor farming practices and deforestation. As land was cleared for agriculture and forestry, the land was left in a fragile, degraded state. As a result, when the hurricane struck this mountainous region, land, livelihoods and lives were swept down the slopes.



But some people fared better than others. In some areas of Honduras, Guatemala and Nicaragua, vegetation contours, rock walls and tree fallows protected the soil, resulting in better retention of topsoil and moisture, and much less overall damage. The lesson: improved farming practices are a key to disaster prevention and mitigation.

A variety of practices can reduce susceptibility to storm

damage. Some crops are more storm-resistant. Diversified cropping systems, conservation tillage, salt-resistant agriculture, windbreaks or shelter belts, soil and water management practices – these are all disaster coping strategies that you can discuss on your radio program to help your listeners prevent and prepare for natural disasters.

Start by learning about the threats in your region. For example, in low-lying areas, rising sea levels and extreme weather are threats. Talk to researchers and other knowledgeable people to find out about the threats to your listeners, and ways to prevent and prepare for natural disasters.

As a radio broadcaster, you have an important role in recover efforts after disaster strikes. Be a reliable source of information, as the situation unfolds, and about emergency and recovery services available. Reconstruction requires an integrated approach: respect the economic, political and cultural lives of your listeners, and understand how these interact with the natural environment.

(continued on page 4)



## Communicating messages for disaster preparedness



The best prevention against the risks wrought by disasters is a resilient and inclusive community. Use your radio programs to talk with the people in your community. The importance of your connection with people — your listeners — at times of an approaching disaster cannot be overstated. Be clear about your objectives. Know the messages you want to convey. And use your creativity to make your programs as effective as possible.

Here are some ideas to interest your listeners in disaster preparedness:

- 1 Tell your audience about how important food security and farmers are, especially in times of natural disasters. Promote the role of farmers and give them the status they deserve.
- 2 Develop programs aimed at shifting people's preferences away from imported food, especially during times of disaster. Use your programs to stimulate demand for locally-grown food.
- 3 Establish rural phone 'hot lines' at times leading up to and during disasters. Use the hot lines as part of live call-in programs.
- 4 Ask popular artists and singers to lend their names to promote radio campaigns about disaster preparedness and mitigation. Invite the artists to appear on your programs, and arrange to interview them.
- 5 Organize popular music and song competitions. Make the connection between 'culture' and 'agriculture.'
- 6 Highlight the cost of disasters to agricultural production as well as the costs to the country as a whole. Invite representatives from government (for example the Ministries of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries) and from non-government organizations to participate in educating the general public.

*Adapted from "Communicating hurricane preparedness for agriculture, forestry and fisheries in the Caribbean," by Maria Protz, in SD Dimensions, July, 1999, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Rome, Italy.*

## Network partner educates and empowers



Serving the Brong Ahafo and surrounding regions of Ghana (West Africa), Classic FM 91.9 has covered issues related to disasters since its inception in 1999. Land degradation, soil erosion, floods and fires have affected various communities in Classic FM's broadcast area. Head of Programmes, Kwabena Agyei, says that last year alone, the Brong Ahafo Region witnessed some 133 bushfires that caused untold losses in property and food.

Programs such as "Akufo Ahya" (Farmers' Forum); "Den Na Asi? (What's Happened?)" and "So mu bi" (Folks, Let's Help) educate people and empower communities to manage and prevent disasters. Using a variety of formats, including dramas, interviews, and panel discussions, station staff investigate the root causes of disasters and discuss the effects of unsustainable farming practices. For example, the station has produced radio programs that establish links between land degradation and an increase in drought, fires and landslides.

"When communities understand the causes of disasters," says Agyei, "they can take steps to minimize their impact." With input from local farmers and supervision from the Agricultural Ministry and the National Emergency Relief Agency, Classic FM has developed an interactive way of discussing a wide range of issues including policy development and how conscientious farming practices greatly reduce the threat of disaster. In addition, the station provides a forum for community discussion at large, where individuals can describe their own experiences with disaster as well as make appeals for aid in stricken areas. In fact, the station itself collects and distributes relief items to affected communities.

By taking a dynamic approach to disaster education, Classic FM demonstrates how a radio station can strengthen the capacity of individuals to cope in times of crises, and support communities in times of need.



## Resources for recovery

**Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) Virtual Health Library for Disasters.** An electronic tool produced by PAHO and the WHO providing information on topics related to emergencies and disasters. Available on the Internet. Also available free of charge on CD-Rom from: Emergency Preparedness Program, PAHO, 525 Twenty-third Street NW, Washington, DC 20037 USA. Tel: 202-974-3522, Fax: 202-775-4578. E-mail: [disaster-publications@paho.org](mailto:disaster-publications@paho.org) URL: <http://www.paho.org/disasters/> Or contact: WHO, Department of Emergency and Humanitarian Action, 20 Avenue Appia CH 1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland. E-mail: [eha@who.ch](mailto:eha@who.ch) URL: <http://www.who.int/eha/disasters>

**Information Retrieval after Flooding.** A technical leaflet offering hints on retrieving information from computer, paper and photographic records after they have been submerged in water. Free copies available from: Ulrike Krauss, National Resources Institute, Central Avenue, Chatham Maritime, Kent ME4 4TB, United Kingdom. Tel: 44 1634 880088, Fax: 44 1634 880066/77 (order code TL5).

**Tiempo de huracanes.** A radio soap available on CD Rom, includes 4 stories on community organization before, during and after disasters (hurricanes and floods). Limited quantities are available in Spanish. Contact: Pan American Health Organization/PEH or EIRD, PO Box 3745, San Jose 1000, Costa Rica. E-mail: [elina.palm@eird.org](mailto:elina.palm@eird.org) or [pedcor@sol.racsa.co.cr](mailto:pedcor@sol.racsa.co.cr) Please include planned use of the radio soap with your request.



### Organizations

**Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC).** ADPC is a regional resource center working towards disaster reduction for safer communities and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific. The Center offers training and education, technical services, information, research and networking support, and regional program management. Contact: ADPC, PO Box 4, Klong Luang, Pathumthani 12120, Thailand. Fax: (66-2) 524-5360, E-mail [adpc@ait.ac.th](mailto:adpc@ait.ac.th) URL: <http://www.adpc.ait.ac.th>

**Volunteers in Technical Assistance (VITA).** An organization providing access to information and knowledge to people in developing countries. Contact: VITA, Suite 710, 1600 Wilson Boulevard, Arlington, Virginia 22209-USA. Tel: 703-276-1800, Fax: 703-243-1865 URL: <http://www.vita.org>

**Media Action International** promotes effective use of the media to help local populations in crises and to strengthen the role of information in post-conflict (including natural disasters) and development activities. Contact: Media Action International, Villa de Grand Montfleury 1290 Versoix, Geneva Switzerland. Tel: +41(0)22 950 07 50, Fax: +41(0)22 950 07 52 E-mail: [info@mediaaction.org](mailto:info@mediaaction.org) URL: <http://www.mediaaction.org>



### Other Resources

**Rural Development Forestry/Foresterie pour Développement Rural/Desarollo Rural Forestal (1985-2001).** A trilingual CD Rom produced by the Overseas Development Institute containing 214 publications of forestry-related issues from 1985 to the present day. Limited quantities are available from the Farm Radio Network. Contact: Massi Abdollahian, Library Assistant, Farm Radio Network, Suite 101, 416 Moore Avenue, Toronto, ON Canada M4G 1C9. E-mail: [mabdollahian@farmradio.org](mailto:mabdollahian@farmradio.org)

**Community Radio Manual.** A handbook on establishing, managing and programming for community radio stations, including equipment needs, marketing and fundraising, drama and radio spot production, community participation and evaluation. Includes history of community radio in South Africa and examples of community radio around the world. Available in English. Contact: Open Society Foundation of South Africa, PO Box 23161, Claremont 7735, Capetown South Africa. Tel: (021) 683-3489, Fax: (021)683-3550. E-mail: [admin@ct.osf.org.za](mailto:admin@ct.osf.org.za)





# Call for Nominations

## The George Atkins Communication Award

Established in 1991, the George Atkins Communication Award recognizes outstanding commitment and contribution to radio broadcasting for food security and rural development. Each winner receives a cash prize of US\$250.

We are looking for candidates who demonstrate:

- ★ excellence in the production of radio programs that benefit the rural communities in their broadcast area;
- ★ innovative participatory approaches to communication;
- ★ commitment to community involvement.

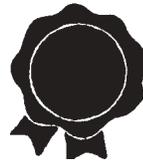
Nominate yourself, your organization or other Network partners. Please submit a statement (up to 1000 words) of why you think this partner should receive the award. Include any relevant information such as photographs, biographical information or samples of recent work with your nomination.

Send submissions by mail to:

The George Atkins Communication Award  
Developing Countries Farm Radio Network  
101-416 Moore Avenue

Toronto, Ontario Canada M4G 1C9

Submissions must be received by October 31, 2002.



Developing  
Countries Farm  
Radio Network

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

416 Moore Avenue  
Suite 101  
Toronto, Ontario  
Canada M4G 1C9  
Telephone: (416) 971-6333  
Fax: (416) 971-5299

General information: info@farmradio.org  
Library: library@farmradio.org  
www.farmradio.org

Managing Editor	Fran Brendon
Contributing Editor	Jennifer Pittet
Contributors	Nancy Bennett Vijay Cuddeford Naomi Fraser
Librarian	Mary Hanson
Library Assistant	Massi Abdollahian
Program Assistant	Naomi Fraser
Outreach Coordinator	Victoria Houston
Executive Director	Nancy Bennett

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

### Radio: a tool for prevention and recovery (cont from page 1)

Do your research. Know your audience needs and preferences — and understand that these will change over time. When cyclones hit Mozambique after the heaviest rains in 50 years, radio programs focused initially on immediate needs of the hundreds of thousands of people left homeless. Programs highlighted health risks, explained trauma, and aided family reunification. Later, radio programs concentrated on resettlement and the issues and conflicts that arise between original settlers of the land and newly resettled flood victims. Debates about these issues were recorded and broadcast, and responses from authorities were invited.

Find out what people need to recover their daily lives. Understand that, regardless of other relief efforts, people

and communities will need to take action themselves. Could these be community resources you can talk about on your programs?

- Gift giving and sharing.
- Extended families.
- Community groups.
- Community trust funds.
- Home gardening.
- Wild plants that provide food.
- Traditional housing, knowledge and experience.

The scripts included in this package will give you more ideas and resources for radio programs about coping with disasters. Your farm radio programs, every day, all year, are coping strategies. Lifting people out of poverty is the best way to reduce the number of people who

need to be rescued when disaster strikes. Be sure to provide practical programs about sustainable farming for your listeners on a regular basis.

*Sources and further information:*  
*Abramovitz, Janet N. Unnatural Disasters. Washington: Worldwatch Institute, 2001.*

*Maskrey, Andrew. Disaster Mitigation: A Community Based Approach. Oxford: Oxfam, 1989.*

*Media Action International. Evaluation Report for Operation Lifeline Media Project Mozambique. April 2001.*

*Simms, Andrew. World Disasters Report: Focus on Recovery. Geneva: International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2001.*

