

RADIO AND FARMERS

A love story



Photo: Sylvie Harrison

By: Kevin Perkins, Executive Director



Canada has a special relationship with radio. For many of us, CBC Radio is embedded in our sense of who we are.

This is especially true for Canadians with a farming background. It was clear in the early days of the CBC how powerful radio could be in helping Canada's farmers, struggling in the wake of the Great Depression. The CBC started airing farming programs in 1939. Two years later, it established the Farm Radio Forum, a national rural listening group project that saw neighbouring farmers gather to listen, review materials, and discuss the agricultural issues of the day.

Good ideas have a way of spreading, and it was not long before India, Ghana, and France adopted the Canadian Farm Radio Forum model, too. In Canada, the Forum continued until 1965.

It is fitting then that the only international NGO dedicated to serving African farmers over the radio was established by a former CBC farm radio broadcaster, George Atkins. It was during a visit to Zambia that George had an idea that would go on to transform farm radio on the continent.

He learned then that his African broadcasting colleagues did not have access to locally relevant agricultural information and resources, and were instead sharing information better suited for large-scale, industrial farms. So George took a year off and traveled the world on the hunt for low-cost, environmentally friendly practices of use to small-scale farmers that he could turn into radio scripts.

In 1979, he established the Developing Countries Farm Radio Network (known today as Farm Radio International) and sent the first package of scripts by mail to 34 participating broadcasters in 26 countries. Fast forward 38 years, and Farm Radio International now counts more than 670 broadcasting partners within its network.

With more than half of the global population still not connected to the internet, radio continues to be the world's most accessible mass medium. Indeed, in the rural African communities served by our broadcasting partners, it's the communication tool that people count on most. **There's still a lot to love about radio.**

DID YOU KNOW?

Kevin Perkins is a regular contributor to *The Huffington Post*. Check out the full edition of the above story and nine others at: huffingtonpost.com

A listening legacy:

The Janet Atkins Memorial Production Studio

Last year, we lost Janet Atkins — devoted wife of Farm Radio International's founder, the late George Atkins. This year, Janet's family and friends celebrated her life by helping to set up a new radio production studio in Uganda in her honour.

The recently equipped Janet Atkins Memorial Production Studio is the newest addition to Kagadi Kibaale Community Radio (KKCR), which has been a Farm Radio International broadcasting partner for more than 10 years.

Since 2006, the broadcasters at KKCR have used Farm Radio resources to serve their listeners, partnered with us to do community-based research on a range of crops, and participated in a number of impact projects. And, two broadcasters from KKCR are past recipients of the George Atkins Communications Award: Anthony Lwanga and Kasooha Ismael.

On the air 16 hours a day, 365 days per year, KKCR broadcasts thousands of programs each year, reaching a listenership of four million people in a 100-mile radius around



Director of Operations Gizaw Shibru reads a letter from the Atkins family during the opening ceremony of the Janet Atkins Memorial Production Studio at Kagadi Kibaale Community Radio in Uganda. Station manager and George Atkins Communications Award winner Anthony Lwanga looks on.

the town of Kagadi in Uganda's Western Region. The new studio will be used primarily for the production of agriculture, environment, and soil and water conservation programs supported by Farm Radio International.

Farm Radio International's director of operations, Gizaw Shibru, was there to cut the ribbon to the studio door and say a few words, reading a letter from the Atkins family to KKCR. "May your studio help you to carry forward the vision that you share with Janet — strong, prosperous rural communities faithfully served by capable and dedicated radio broadcasters," he

said on behalf of the family.

Janet's legacy already lives on in the organization that she worked tirelessly with her husband to establish. And now she also lives on through a radio production studio that carries her name and celebrates her memory.

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Celebrating an extraordinary Canadian

July 1, 2017, is a special date for Canada — and for Farm Radio International. Not only does it mark 150 years since Confederation, it also would have been the 100th birthday of our founder, George Atkins.

On Canada Day, we hope you'll join us in celebrating this extraordinary Canadian. Happy birthday, George. The world is a better place because of you.

Broadcaster profile:

Haruna Rashida

Haruna Rashida truly understands the benefit of good farm radio resources.

Host of *Pukparba Saha* (*Farmers' Time*) on Ghana's Northstar Radio, Haruna recently attended a Farm Radio International broadcaster resources workshop in Tamale. After the training, she took a few minutes to sit down with our staff and reflect on the impact of Farming Radio International's broadcaster resources and training on her radio program, her listeners, and herself.

She says that she has become a better broadcaster thanks to Farm Radio, having learned how to better capture farmers' views and challenges in the interviews she conducts with them in the field. Farmers' voices are now heard loud and clear in her program, especially those of women — who Haruna makes a special effort to include. She is also incorporating farmers' experiences into radio dramas, which she says have done a lot to increase the adoption of improved farming practices. They have proven so popular that "some children are even able to narrate the drama" to her when she visits listening communities.

Haruna says that farmers are now regularly calling into the station to find out when *Pukparba Saha* will be on to make sure that they don't miss it. And she knows that the show is making a big difference in farmers' lives because they tell her so.

Farmers in Kumbungu, for example, told her that they have stopped doing bush burning and are now using cover crops to help the soil retain more nutrients, just like they learned on the radio. One farmer's maize harvest went from 7 bags to at least 10 as a result, and he is now teaching other farmers to follow suit.

A farmer in another community told her that it was learning about the nutritional benefits of soya beans through her program that convinced him to try growing them, and to become a local advocate for soya bean cultivation.

But Haruna's listeners weren't the only ones to be impacted by her improved farm radio program. Haruna herself decided to take up farming because of the information and knowledge she was gaining through Farm Radio International.

"I got the motivation to farm through the resources and what I learnt about farming on the farmers' program."

Equipped with Farm Radio International resources and a small plot of land offered to her by one of her satisfied listeners, Haruna began farming in 2016. She says that she is happy to have ventured into farming and enjoyed a good harvest last year.



Hear the love

Sharing our favourite messages from World Radio Day

In the last edition of *Tuning In*, we invited you to celebrate World Radio Day with us by sharing why you love radio on February 13. We also asked people around the world to do the same through a special mobile poll in partnership with UNESCO.

In line with the official theme of World Radio Day 2017 ("Radio Is You!"), we worked with UNESCO to ask radio listeners globally about their relationship to radio. Using our Uliza technology, we asked them why they listen, what they listen to, and how they prefer to interact with their radio station. We also asked them to leave a voice message sharing one thing that radio has done for them.

The poll was made available in the core UNESCO languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish) as well as in the local languages used by our broadcasting partners across sub-Saharan Africa.

We were thrilled with the results. More than 800 people from 27 countries around the world participated in the poll — and nearly 600 left voice recordings, sharing how radio has made a difference in their lives.

We have combed through the voice messages in order to share our favourite ones with you. Listen to our top picks on our blog (farmradio.org/ourblog/) or explore all of the messages and the full poll results at wrd.uliza.fm.



What is Uliza?

Uliza combines Interactive Voice Response (IVR) technology with a computerized dashboard

to enable a conversation between radio stations and their listeners. Using their mobile phones, listeners can request information, send feedback, participate in interactive polls, and contribute comments and questions as audio recordings.

On the road

with Farm Radio

In February, 14 friends of Farm Radio had the chance to go on the road with us as part of our first-ever learning tour to Tanzania.

The tour gave participants a unique opportunity to experience the country through the eyes and ears of Farm Radio International. It was led by Farm Radio's executive director, Kevin Perkins, who spent a year working from Tanzania not so long ago and was excited to go back.

Participants got to know the Farm Radio team, met with individual farmers and a community listening group, watched rural radio stations in action, and visited an international agricultural research centre. They got their hands dirty on a farm, where they learned about beekeeping, coffee production, cheese making, and more. And they saw first-hand how radio and mobile phones are transforming lives for the better.

The tour showcased Tanzania's natural beauty, flora, and fauna through a safari, visits to conservation areas, and a tour of the Olduvai Gorge.

No trip to Tanzania is complete without some rest and relaxation in Zanzibar. Participants spent time in the ancient coastal city of Stone Town, exploring its narrow, winding alleyways and spice markets, and nearby sandy beaches. The trip was capped off with a visit to Dar es Salaam, where participants learned about Canada's history of cooperation with Tanzania during a meeting with Ian Myles, Canada's High



Learning tour participants on a visit to The Hangar to learn about the innovative ways that Farm Radio is combining radio with other technologies for an even greater impact.

"One of the highlights of the trip was the two-hour session with a women's listening group. [...] Farm Radio provided [the group] with a small solar radio and they would gather once a week to listen to the program and discuss together how to use that knowledge in their own farming efforts."

~ Thea de Groot

Commissioner to Tanzania.

They say that seeing is believing, and this was no exception. Exploring the rural countryside and talking with farmers, broadcasters, and other stakeholders was an eye-opening experience for tour participants, helping them understand the challenges that farmers face, as well as the resources and solutions that provide plenty of reason for hope.

When we were planning the tour, we hoped that participants would come back feeling even more enthusiastic about our work. When we asked them in a follow-up survey if they would recommend the tour to others, 100% of respondents said, "Definitely!"

The trip was such a success that we're already planning the next one. The second Discover Tanzania tour will take place in late November or early December. Stay tuned!

The first learning tour sold out. If you want to be among the first to know about the next one, email discover@farmradio.org or call **613-761-3659**.



Discover Tanzania on Facebook

We recently put together an album of some of our favourite photos from the learning tour. Check it out on our Facebook page: facebook.com/farmradio



Supporting broadcasters in developing countries to strengthen small-scale farming and rural communities.

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