



PROMOTING EQUALITY THROUGH KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION

AMPLIFYING THE VOICE OF RURAL WOMEN

Radio is a powerful tool for reducing gender inequality and addressing women's specific needs and interests. Farm Radio International works towards these goals with programs that meet the information needs of rural women and men. With good information on agriculture and marketing, health and nutrition, women and men are empowered to make choices and influence decisions that lead to increased food production and income, as well as better health for themselves and their families. We provide a platform for women to express their information needs by engaging them throughout our programs. Our initiatives also amplify the voice of women by ensuring that their voices are heard on air, both as radio producers and radio interviewees.



@farmradio



THE PROBLEM

Women in rural sub-Saharan Africa play a vitally important role in farming, food and nutrition security, family and community health, and in local, regional and national economies. Yet women are more likely to: 1. experience extreme poverty, malnutrition and poor health; and 2. have less access to and control over assets and resources¹.

Underlying causes include:

- tenuous and inequitable access to land, information, and other resources;
- low participation in decision-making;
- unequal access to, and control over, profits from production.



FRI APPROACH

FRI is committed to promoting gender equality through all of our work by:

1. Responding to the communication needs of women and men farmers, including representing women and men farmers equitably and respectfully.
2. Developing the capacity of rural radio broadcasters to:
 - facilitate culturally appropriate and effective dialogue about gender equality;
 - forge links with organizations involved in the promotion of gender equality and women's rights;
 - produce programs that respond to both the practical and strategic needs of women and men;
 - give voice equitably to women and men farmers in the discussion of issues related to agriculture, health and rural development.
3. Encouraging a positive working environment at partner stations that supports equal opportunities for women and men.
4. Facilitating increased access to radio listening and radio program participation by women farmers.



HIGHLIGHTS

OF FRI'S WORK TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY

RESULTS

- **More than 200,000** women farmers from Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Uganda and Tanzania have applied at least one agricultural practice aimed at climate change adaptation, after listening to a program designed to meet the needs of both women and men farmers, in projects supported by Irish Aid and GIZ.
- **94 episodes** of programming on the value chains of cassava, legumes and poultry responded to a gender-specific issue or promoted gender equality, in a project supported by Global Affairs Canada.
- Surveys taken before and after a radio campaign in Ethiopia on teff production showed that the program **equalized knowledge levels between male and female listeners**. While women scored lower on the "before" survey, both men and women farmers scored over 70% on the "after" knowledge quiz. This project was supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

INNOVATION

- **Produced a radio drama** entitled *My Children* featuring a woman who stops her husband from selling their farmland and convinces of the value of orange-fleshed sweet potato (a crop promoted to reduce the incidence of vitamin A deficiency). This drama has been broadcast in Uganda, Tanzania and Ghana.
- Developed and tested the concept of a **"women-only phone line"** for calling in to radio shows. This has proven effective for airing an equal volume of feedback from female and male listeners.



RADIO OVERCOMES MYTHS

TO IMPROVE MATERNAL, NEWBORN AND CHILD HEALTH

Saria is a community in Koudougou, in Burkina Faso. It is part of a district which recorded some of the worst health indicators in the country in 2007, including 81 infant deaths per 1000 live births and 307 maternal deaths per 100,000.



**81 INFANT DEATHS PER
1000 LIVE BIRTHS**

In 2014, a group of mothers from Saria gathered for a focus group discussion. One of the participants spoke of a recent, positive change. She said: "Two years ago, we used to go the health centre every week because there was malnutrition. But since we received this knowledge, we had an important support."

The knowledge received by the women was broadcast through a Participatory Radio Campaign (PRC) developed by local station Radio Palabre, with support and guidance from FRI. The radio campaign was part of a the "Project d'Amélioration de la Santé des Mères et des Enfants" (PASME) project in Burkina Faso.

The project aimed to reduce maternal, infant, and child mortality and illness by focusing on one of the root causes: poor nutrition. Specifically, the radio broadcasts promoted exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life and the consumption of nutritious local foods by pregnant women and young children.

In doing so, the radio campaign came in opposition to many myths and taboos about feeding pregnant women, babies and children. For example, pregnant women and children are commonly prohibited from eating eggs and milk. As well, colostrum (the first breastmilk produced by a woman just after childbirth), was commonly expressed and wasted, contrary to the WHO recommendation that newborns be put to the breast as soon as possible.

Such culturally-based beliefs are difficult to challenge, as pregnant women typically come under the care of older women. However, the PRC allowed listeners to pose questions and offer feedback on advice given over the air. This interaction made participatory radio an effective tool in presenting information that challenges myths and taboos.

Approximately 466,000 were reached by the radio campaign on nutrition for pregnant women and children. Local health centers reported positive changes to the knowledge of mothers they see and in the treatment of children for malnutrition.

A health officer from Palgo Primary health care center stated: "In villages, information aired on radio about porridge enriched with local food has increased the level of acceptability and helped reduce malnutrition."

PASME was a three-year project implemented by our strategic partner – World University Service of Canada (WUSC), with funding from Canada's Muskoka Initiative. The radio campaign was one component of the project, implemented by FRI. We are gearing up for a second phase of PASME in 2016 with support from Global Affairs Canada.



IN FOCUS

REMOVING BARRIERS TO PUT HER VOICE ON AIR



What does it take to get women's voices on air? By working closely with African radio broadcasters and rural communities, FRI has gained insights into the barriers that can prevent women from speaking to radio producers and having their voices broadcast on radio programs. The "Her Voice on Air" project is used both proven and innovative techniques to remove these barriers.

"Her Voice on Air" was a component of a broader initiative to dramatically increase the number of farmers in Ethiopia, Malawi, Tanzania and Uganda who can access regular, informative and interactive farm radio shows. In particular, these projects trained broadcasters to work closely with their audience so that farmers define and influence program content. "Her Voice on Air" ensured that women farmers have the opportunity to share their needs, perspectives and issues.

The project took a three-pronged approach:

- 1. Media training for women:** Training events provided women from 120 community listening groups in the four countries with the skills and confidence to use mobile technologies to record their own comments, questions and stories and to share them with radio broadcasters.
- 2. Access to technology for women:** Experience and study have shown us that women have unequal access to radios and cellphone airtime. A radio and a cellphone was given to each of 120 community listening groups, providing 1,000 women with the technology to participate in radio programs.
- 3. Gender equality training for radio staff:** Broadcasters and other staff at 12 radio stations in the four countries were trained about the value of gender equality in farmer programming. They were encouraged to air the comments, questions and stories of women, and to ensure women's needs and interests are discussed on air during regular programming.

These steps ensure that women can add their voices, questions and comments to the conversation around agriculture and food security. Through participatory radio, they also provides women with increased access to information that is critical to improving their livelihoods.

"Her Voice on Air" was funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and incorporated into the "Developing ongoing demand-led interactive farm radio services" project, which was made possible by Irish Aid.



Farm Radio International is a Canadian charity that harnesses the power of radio to meet the needs of small-scale farmers. We work with more than 600 radio partners located in 39 African countries to fight poverty and food insecurity. FRI resources and training help African broadcasters produce and deliver practical, relevant and timely information to tens of millions of farmers. We also work with a range of partners to implement radio projects that respond to community needs. In 2015, FRI received the WSIS Project Prize in recognition of our innovative use of radio to change lives.



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