



## BROADCASTING IN TIMES OF CRISIS

"Since the announcement of the coronavirus in our country, radios are now selling like hotcakes because there is a need for information. The people of the villages have only the radio to inform themselves."

Théophile Nébié is the head of programs at Radio Loudon in Sapouy, Burkina Faso. He's among a number of his colleagues across the African continent who are doing extraordinary work in response to COVID-19.

For Théophile, that's meant different things. In some cases, it's simply playing the role journalists play everywhere: delivering quality information about COVID-19 in ways his listening audience can understand and use to stay safe. But Théophile is also working on a project with Farm Radio International where we address the nutrition, health and sexual and reproductive health of youth.

Working with Helen Keller International, through financial support of Global Affairs Canada, the project supports school, community and parental groups

over the airwaves with ways to improve the well being of youth. But COVID-19 has changed the realities faced by those youth.

Schools have closed, which means youth are spending more time at home. For young women, that means the threat of a forced marriage has increased.

As a result, Radio Loudon is not only addressing the health risks faced by communities, but how the changes are impacting the most vulnerable — especially women and girls.

Radio Loudon is not alone in adapting programming to COVID-19. Radio Simba in Uganda is doing the same. Presenters there are recording audio spots that inform listeners — but that also stay upbeat.

---

**"We designed our messages so that however much they might be scary we convey them to the listeners in a welcoming way and style,"**

Muribu Ali, Radio Simba presenter

---

But in Uganda, there's also a curfew and a ban on public and private cars. The station is recording their shows in advance if they take place after curfew, and some presenters are also sleeping at the station.

It's been challenging, but Muribu is concerned about keeping the voices of farmers on air.

"Farming has to continue, and people need to produce," he says — and his programs reflect that.

In times of crisis, radio becomes an essential service. For many, especially in hard to reach and vulnerable communities, it is the only place people have access to lifesaving and crucial information.

For Miribu, Théophile, and broadcasters across the continent, they are on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic — doing essential work to keep their communities safe and healthy.

**Support broadcasters across Africa** by donating to our Rapid Emergency Fund at [farmradio.org/covid19](https://farmradio.org/covid19)





# SUPPORTING RADIO JOURNALISM DURING COVID-19

For many in the communities rural broadcasters serve, radio is the only source of information. And, like the rest of us, broadcasters are adapting to a new reality under the threat of COVID-19.

Answers to questions about symptoms, transmission, and how to prevent the coronavirus are critical. For Farm Radio International's partner broadcasters, it's equally important to consider how to adapt this information for rural Africans, many of whom face a different reality than those who live in the city.

That's why Farm Radio is working in five different areas to support radio broadcasters as they adapt to this crisis:



## Rapid Emergency Fund

We've launched an emergency fund to support broadcasters and radio stations as they develop exceptional communication efforts to underserved communities where they are needed most.



## Broadcaster hotline

Our digital innovation team has developed a broadcaster rapid response call-in service and chat bot, where broadcasters can access FAQs, fact check information and ask questions in real time.



## Broadcaster resources

We're actively developing, sharing and distributing good gender sensitive information to broadcasters so they are equipped and can stay safe while getting information to their listeners about how to stop the spread of COVID-19.



## Creating connections

We've set up online spaces to give radio broadcasters a place to learn from each other about best practices in COVID-19 radio programming.

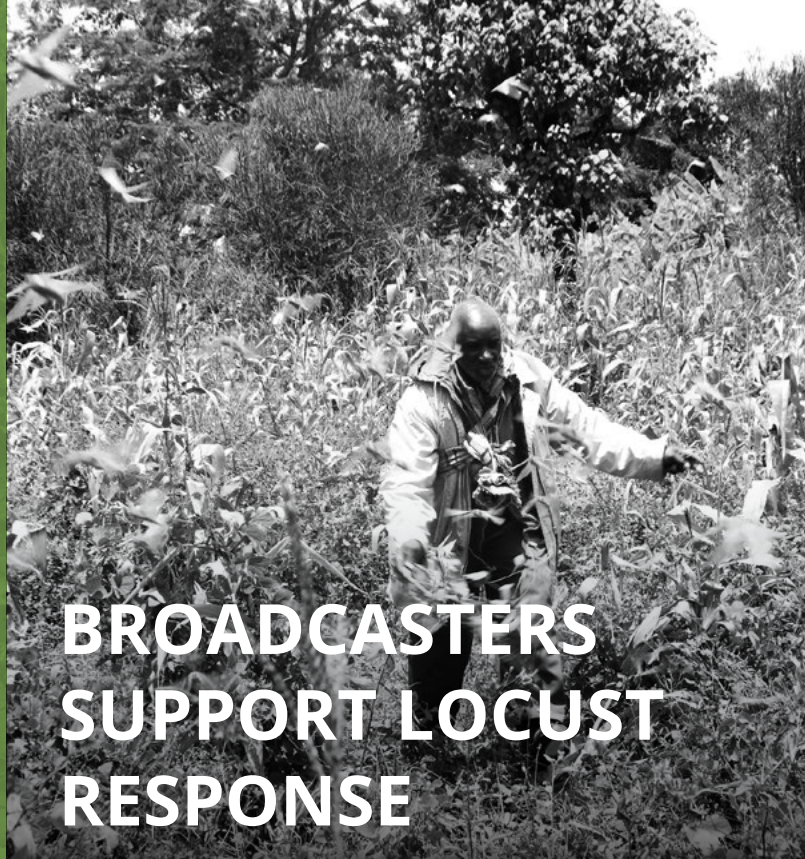


## Creating connections

We're adapting our current radio project programming in Africa to meet the needs of communities affected by COVID-19 and to prevent further spread of the virus.



**Hear from African broadcasters about the challenges they are facing right now** — Watch our online town hall: Radio Journalism in a Time of Crisis at [farmradio.org/townhall](http://farmradio.org/townhall)



## BROADCASTERS SUPPORT LOCUST RESPONSE

While COVID-19 has captured the attention of the world, several countries in East Africa are facing an additional threat: locusts.

In Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia swarms of locusts are hitting fields in waves, devouring much of what is in their path. In May, they numbered in the trillions.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations warns that the locust swarms "represent an unprecedented threat to food security and livelihoods in East Africa."

"Most farmers are just worried, because they don't know if they should focus themselves to avoid catching COVID-19, or if they should go out to look after their animals," says Velma Odwori, a presenter at Biftu Radio in Marsabit county, one of the counties in Kenya hit particularly hard by the locusts.

There are no easy solutions, but Farm Radio International is working with broadcasters to get them resources they can use on air to support farmers in their listening communities.

---

**"We are just trying because it is a service to humanity."**

---

We've developed a series of eight radio spots that broadcasters can translate, record, and play on their radio stations throughout the day.

*Continued above »*



Some focus on the facts. Some tell farmers what they can do if they see a swarm. Others look at how farmers can stay safe while pesticide spraying happens.

"With the locusts we mostly track them," says Velma. "Listeners would tell us where the locusts are and we would tell the government."



Now they're still doing that — but also keeping listeners informed on how to stay safe in the face of the coronavirus. It's not an easy task to balance.

"Radio is very important because most people here are not rich, but most can afford a radio. So most rely fully on radio for information," says Velma. "What we tell them they believe, because we pass the information on how it relates to them."

Velma says she's been translating the resources provided by Farm Radio into Borona and Swahili, the languages spoken by her listeners, and using them on air.

It's an uphill battle right now, both against the locusts and to convince her listeners of the real threat COVID-19 presents. Still, Velma is not giving up anytime soon.

## 1,000 PARTNERS AND COUNTING

*We're so excited to welcome our 1,000th broadcasting partner to our network!*

Almost 100 kilometres from Dakar, Ngoundiane FM is a Senegalese community radio station that believes in finding solutions for farmers. Ngoundiane FM joined our network of broadcasting partners in March 2020, becoming our 1,000th partner.

Since the beginning, Farm Radio International has always partnered with local radio stations and broadcasters. Through resources like scripts, backgrounders and how-to guides, as well as a newswire, and online training opportunities and mentorship, Farm Radio works with our broadcasting partners to support their work and improve their programming.

In 1979 we had only 34 partners — now we have 1,000!

Located in the agricultural region of Thiès, Ngoundiane FM has a broadcasting radius of 70 kilometres.

The station has two programs that specifically target farmers: Eutou Baykatt Yior, or "Farmers'

Space" and Thiamm ak mbay or "Livestock and Agriculture." The programs are broadcast in Wolof and Sérère.

Eutou Baykatt Yior shares the experiences and highlights the challenges of farmers.

"It is an interactive programme that allows farmers to ask questions," says Aliou Tine, the radio station's director.

"And of course, when they ask questions, it's to get an answer."

This is why each episode of Farmers' Space features regional farmers who discuss their work. When other farmers call in, they ask questions of the guests who try to answer them on-air.

Thiamm ak mbay, on the other hand, focuses on interactions between farmers and herders, and cooperation between the two groups.

Conflicts often arise between the groups because farmers and herders cross over into each other's area. Herders say

there is not enough space for their cattle because of farms. Farmers, already facing low yields, say that they need all their land for a good harvest.

"Through this program, we have been able to make people understand ... that they can live together, that everyone can do their own thing."

It is rarely easy to find solutions to the problems of the agricultural world. That's why Ngoundiane FM tries to engage a specialized resource person as a guest to help explain the technical aspects of each topic.

Since the station became a Farm Radio International partner, wNgoundiane FM staff have participated in a workshop where they were oriented on how to use Farm Radio resources to improve their programming.

Since then, says Aliou, they feel more capable of communicating — and cooperating — with rural listeners.



## 2020 LIZ HUGHES AWARD WINNER FOR HER FARM RADIO: UGANDA COMMUNITY GREEN RADIO

*The Liz Hughes Award, named after former board member and CBC broadcaster Liz Hughes, is awarded to programs that amplify the voices of women and address local gender equality issues.*

Aware that the stories of women went untold and underreported, the staff at Uganda Community Green Radio set out to make a change — they started a program designed to amplify the voices of rural women: the Nyinabwenge women's program.

The Nyinabwenge program runs every Saturday evening for two hours, at a time that is convenient for rural women, who are often busy during the day. It addresses topics like policy-making, the protection of property rights, food security and identifies gender gaps across the community.

By recording their voices and inviting them onto the show, the program has helped local women gain confidence. The women see the program as a safe space to talk about issues without fear, and a place where they can hold their leaders accountable.

"This radio has changed the lives of many women," says Norah Bahongye, a member of the Kigaaga listener club in Kabaale village.

"I did not know that me as bahongye, a rural peasant farmer, can be on the radio. I thank the radio management for aiming at amplifying [the voices of] women. I have indigenous knowledge on farming, like best seed selection and pest control, which I have shared on radio, and people even come looking for me to learn."

The broadcasters at Uganda Community Green Radio believe that they can make a difference by recording women's voices telling their own stories. They also make a point of hosting successful women and supportive men to discuss how they can change the status quo.

Penina Ruhindi is another member of the Kigaaga listener club. She says the members of the club are putting the lessons from the radio station into action.

"When we listen, we reflect on our community and identify the challenges talked about. We then try to find solutions. Like now we are taking it upon ourselves as listener club members to encourage women to gain confidence and speak up on issues affecting them and defend their rights. We encourage women to go on radio."



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

**Contributors:** Tara Sprickerhoff, Hannah Tellier, Moses Provabs, Katie Burnham, Vijay Cuddeford, Nadine Tarnagda, Stanley Ongwae  
**Design:** Tom Jansen

### Farm Radio International

1404 Scott Street | Ottawa, Ontario | K1Y 4M8  
Tel: 613-761-3650 | Fax: 613-798-0990  
Toll-free: 1-888-773-7717  
Email: [info@farmradio.org](mailto:info@farmradio.org) | [www.farmradio.org](http://www.farmradio.org)

### Donate online at [farmradio.org](http://farmradio.org)

Tax receipts are issued for all donations of \$10 or more.  
Charitable Registration Number (BN)  
11888 4808 RR0001