

Fighting the spread of Ebola (myths) through radio

As West Africa continues to respond to the Ebola outbreak, one tool is helping to combat misconceptions and misinformation about the disease: **radio**. In Liberia, Jefferson Massah and his team at Radio Gbarnga broadcast the daily Ebola Situation Report.

Jefferson knows the power of radio, having participated in FRI e-courses. When Ebola hit central Liberia, he knew his radio broadcasts could keep Bong County informed on the spread of Ebola and the country's response to the outbreak.

But he also realized he needed support to keep the radio program on air and to provide timely information to his listeners, so he turned to Farm Radio International.

To respond to the Ebola emergency, Radio Gbarnga needs to stay on air an extra two hours a day. The station's reporters and producers make extra trips to the field to conduct interviews and gather accurate information.

In order to accomplish this, Jefferson knew he needed extra funds to buy gas for the generator and for the motorbikes, as well as mobile credit to conduct phone interviews.

We are helping him meet these needs with extra funding. We also connected him with our ICT experts in Tanzania, who have showed Jefferson how interactive polling technology could enhance his show.

With beep-to-vote, Jefferson could quiz his listeners to find out what information they need. Beep-to-vote allows



Liberian radio broadcaster Jefferson Massah (right) interviews an Ebola survivor for Radio Gabargna's Ebola Situation Report.

listeners to respond to a poll simply by calling a number designated to the desired response, and leaving a missed call "beep." These numbers are announced on air along with the question.

Jefferson's team is helping their listeners recognize the symptoms of Ebola with catchy jingles that explain how to identify Ebola and how to avoid contracting the disease.

They have also conducted interviews with health authorities and international organizations working in the region to inform the community about the national and international progress in fighting the outbreak.

Hear clips from Ebola Situation Report on our blog: farmradio.org/ourblog

Thank you for thanking a farmer

This fall, our Thank a Farmer initiative received:

118 voice messages (*worth \$20 each*)
\$5,935 in donations (*matched 3 to 1*)
675 new social media follows (*worth \$1 each*)

Because of you, we raised **\$27,000** to support our work.



Sharing the importance of radio

This fall Tanzania country director Japhet Emmanuel had the opportunity to visit Ottawa, Toronto and Winnipeg to share the latest initiatives from the Tanzania office, including the innovative work being done at The Hangar – Radio and ICT innovation lab, and news of Agripoll, a Tanzania-wide poll conducted in May 2014.

Japhet also shared his perspective on why radio is important to farmers, particularly women farmers.

“Radio does a lot of work. It reaches men and women and children too,” Japhet said. “It was radio that brought me into life.”

Japhet grew up in a farming family, helping his father with the planting, weeding and harvesting.

He also grew up with a love of radio passed down from his father, who told him to listen to BBC World Service to learn English and to understand what is going on in the world. Since Tanzania was served at the time by just one radio station – Tanzania Broadcasting Corporation – their family had to use a shortwave radio just to listen to BBC.

“Since then, it changed my thinking, my knowledge,” said Japhet. “I still listen to the radio a lot.”

But radio has changed significantly since Japhet was a young boy. With more than 500 million cellphones in sub-Saharan Africa, FRI has developed tools that turn radio into a two-way method of communication.

Farmers can “beep” (leave a missed call) and an interactive voice response system will call back to



Tanzania country director Japhet Emmanuel (right) at the Africa Rocks! bonspiel with FRI's Mark Leclair.

provide weather information or ask the farmer to vote in a poll. Farmers can also call into the radio station to ask questions that the hosts will incorporate into their farm radio program.

“This is something new Farm Radio is bringing into the radio world,” said Japhet.

Japhet was featured on CBC Manitoba's Radio Noon show and in the Manitoba Co-operator, sharing the work of Farm Radio International with a larger audience.

While in Canada, Japhet also had the opportunity to enjoy one of our national sports: curling. He joined donors and staff at the 6th Africa Rocks! bonspiel.

Thank you to all who came out Oct. 25 to the Rideau Curling Club. Together we raised \$5,200.

Lessons learned on the radio are lessons learned for life

In 2008, Ugandan farmer Silkei Mike Chemusto heard a radio program about Victoria Highland Irish potato production.

“The message I got from that radio program helped me to expand my Victoria Highland Irish potatoes and construct that storage,” Silkei told Askebir Gebru, country director for Uganda, while showing off his granary.

“Before the radio show I did not have the skills to expand. Learning from the PRC messages helped me, and I constructed this storage. I harvested these potatoes in July 2014 and still [at the end of September] they look fresh,” Silkei said. Storing potatoes in a well-built granary means that Silkei can keep selling potatoes longer and at times when they fetch the best price. The result is more food and income throughout the year.

The program Silkei described was part of a Participatory Radio Campaign (PRC) implemented by FRI in 2008 as part of the African Farm Radio Results Initiative (AFRRI). The PRC – one of 10 conducted as part of AFRRI in Uganda – was produced and broadcast by the Uganda Broadcasting Corporation, and focused on scaling up Victoria Highland Irish potato production, seed selection and storage.

Six years later, in September 2014, Askebir learned about Silkei's success while he was visiting Kwoti parish, near the eastern border of Uganda. Askebir and his colleagues were in the parish making preparations for a new project called the Forest Landscape Restoration project. Silkei's story confirmed the remarkable long-term impact that this PRC had on the potato harvests of farmers in Kwoti.

Silkei, a father of two children, said the radio program increased his interest in planting potatoes and helped him expand his production. Before hearing the radio program, Silkei planted eight to ten bags of potatoes. Last year, he planted 55 bags and harvested 535 bags, selling each bag for about 30,000 Ugandan shillings (about \$12.50). Now his most pressing challenges are finding a reliable source of good seed and access to markets for his increased production.



Silkei Mike Chemusto's potato harvest has only grown after hearing a participatory radio campaign about Irish potatoes aired by Uganda Broadcasting Corporation six years ago.

Celebrating Farm Radio Resource Pack 100



FRI founder George Atkins.

In May 1979, our first script package was mailed to 34 broadcasters in South Asia, Latin America and Africa. The scripts covered a number of important issues, including pest management, raising rabbits and feeding cattle. In addition to paper scripts, the package included audio recordings on cassettes (remember those?).

Since then, Farm Radio International has changed its name from Developing Countries Farm Radio Network and has expanded its script packages into “Farm Radio Resource Packs” containing backgrounders, “broadcaster how-to” guides, and other useful documents. While FRI has concentrated its focus on sub-Saharan Africa, we now have partnerships with more radio stations than ever.

Thirty-five years after that first script package was mailed out, our 100th farm radio resource pack has been sent to 578 broadcasting partners in 38

countries. It is also available on-line, where it is accessed by thousands of other groups and individuals seeking to serve small-scale farmers with information.

Our 100th package features scripts on fish farming, improved vegetable production and how to hold officials accountable in interviews.

This package also includes one of FRI founder George Atkins' original scripts from the very first script package – a script on how to build an improved maize storage crib. Maize is the most important staple crop in many African countries, making a script on maize storage relevant even after 35 years.

Over 100 issues, our resource packs have changed in many ways. Most items are now written by African

writers, with a focus on interviews and dramas that can be easily adapted by broadcasters based on local needs and interests.

“We relate the issue in the script to the local context – highlighting relevant farming technologies being promoted,” one broadcaster told FRI researchers on how they use the resource packs.

This great resource for broadcasters has been made possible by you and other Canadian supporters, as well as Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada, Anne Burnett, Canadian Auto Workers – Social Justice Fund, Donner Canadian Foundation, Harbringer Foundation, The McCain Foundation, and the Water Integrity Network.

Donor profile: Janna Best

Janna Best knows the hard-work and dedication it takes to farm. She and her husband Henry ran a hobby farm in Southern Ontario years ago. Both she and her husband were keen on sustainable farming and sustainable eating. In fact, years later Henry was president of a local farmers' market in Sudbury.

Janna also knows the importance of radio. Growing up in Scotland during the Second World War, radio was a lifeline for her family. As farmers, she and her husband also learned from, and enjoyed, George Atkins' Farm Radio noon show on CBC. Janna says radio is a natural tool to reach farmers, as it is affordable, accessible and friendly, intimate medium.

Henry was a long-time donor, and, after he died, Janna has continued to support Farm Radio International. She is now a Friend of Farmers monthly donor, helping to provide us with steady, reliable funding. Monthly donors lower our fundraising costs, and allow us to plan for future projects knowing we have the support of regular donors.

We are well on our way to achieving our goal of 35 new monthly donors to celebrate our 35th anniversary. To help us reach this goal, register to become a monthly donor before May 1.

Celebrate World Radio Day by telling us why you love radio!

Love is in the air! Not only is Valentine's Day around the corner, but so is World Radio Day. We know you share our love of radio and we are hoping you will share it with the world. Send us a message this Feb. 13 sharing why you love radio.

If you're on Twitter, complete the following tweet: "@farmradio, #iloveradio because ..." (If you have room, please include the hashtag #worldradioday in your tweet so that others interested in World Radio Day can find it.)

If you're on Facebook, post your reasons for loving radio on our wall, along with the hashtags #iloveradio and #worldradioday.



Bruce Best on his parents' farm in March 1971.

Looking back on 2013–2014:

Our annual report is online — and bigger than ever.

2014 was the International Year of Family Farming, which provided a great opportunity for us to showcase our commitment to serving small-scale farmers.

With 21 projects underway in 2013–2014, we used radio in innovative ways to help farmers improve their economic and food security.

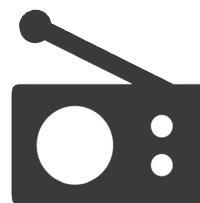
We engaged listeners through reality radio and radio dramas, and we have found new ways to connect with farmers through their cellphones, such as beep-to-vote and Beep4Weather.

We also expanded our work into new areas with six new projects in 2013–2014, many of which are still underway.

Our interactive, online annual report allows readers to explore our projects and their impact through stories, photos, video and audio.

Learn about our impact at: www.farmradio.org/2014

Or in French at: farmradio.org/2014fr



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

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