At Farm Radio International, we are inspired by the vision that so many rural Africans have for their communities and families — namely, that they be prosperous, just, and vibrant, where farming and related livelihoods thrive.

Too frequently, these same communities are underserved and marginalized. Yet, while the number of undernourished people in the world is rising, and emergencies serve to undercut already fragile health or extension services, rural people continue to strive to improve their lives.

Farm Radio International aims to ensure that every rural African, no matter their gender, age or background, has access to good information that they can use to improve their lives and livelihoods; that they have the support they need to make change in their own communities; and that their voices are amplified, so they have a say in their own development.

An average of 65%1 of rural households in Africa own a radio, and those that don’t can usually listen with their neighbours. For many, internet access and television remain out of reach, or basic literacy is still inaccessible. Radio is often the only trusted source of information about agriculture, health and nutrition in many African countries, broadcast in national and local languages.

It sounds simple, but a high-quality radio program can be the difference between a good harvest and a bad one, health and hunger, and a life of plenty or one plagued by poverty. The radio shows and digital information and communication technology (ICT) services that Farm Radio supports help tens of millions of farmers and rural Africans enjoy a better life through their own hard work and determination.

This strategic plan for 2020-2025 is a roadmap to achieve our short term and long term goals over the next five years.

Our mission

Our contribution to this vision is simple, practical and effective: **we make radio a more powerful force for good in rural Africa — one that shares knowledge, amplifies voices, and supports positive change.**

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1 Census data from 11 countries in East and West Africa combined with estimates from collected FRI data.

Cover: Mariama Diallo, Diabou Wandia, and Ansara Kondé, pose next to their farm in Saré Demba Diéo, near Kolda, Senegal. © Tara Sprickerhoff
A Community Effort

In April 2020, Farm Radio International embarked on a new five-year strategic plan.

The plan was the product of a highly participatory and consultative process, involving staff at all levels and in all countries and the Board of Directors. We consulted internally and externally, surveyed the broadcasters that count on our services, looked at case studies and research findings, and reflected on learnings from our own work and experiences.

We began with a review of the results and learnings of our 2015-20 strategic plan — a period that saw an expansion in the scope and reach of our work. We strengthened our project implementation systems and processes, continually innovated in our specialized niche — interactive radio; made a deeper commitment to gender equality and inclusion; expanded our capacity to evaluate, learn and share knowledge about the outcomes of interactive radio; and grew our fundraising success.

We took a close look at our mission, vision and mandate, re-committing to the vision held by so many rural Africans — prosperous, just and vibrant communities. And we affirmed our role in bringing this vision closer to fruition: making radio a more powerful force for good in rural Africa — one that shares knowledge, amplifies voices, and supports positive change. Our mandate — to work directly with radio stations of all types in sub-Saharan Africa so that they are better able to serve their rural audiences with inclusive, effective, reliable, evidence-based, and consistent communication services — was validated. We expanded our remit from a tight focus on agriculture and small-scale farming to one that includes all the intersecting development challenges facing farming families in rural Africa.

Our work in 2020 and beyond will be directed toward achieving three strategic intentions. These intentions are designed to direct our work, both internally and externally as we strive to achieve our mission and vision.

First, with the focus on our own capacity we will advance FRI's effectiveness, dynamism and commitment to equality and inclusion. We aim to become a leader in ensuring rural Africans of all genders can aspire to a better future.

We have seen the immense, transformative power of interactive radio. And we are frustrated by the large gap that remains between its vast potential, and present levels of investment. Our second intention, therefore, is to mobilize greater investments in Interactive Radio for Sustainable Development by organizations and people committed to positive change in rural Africa.

Third, it is our intention that interactive radio become as effective as possible. Our aim is to make it the “channel of choice” that rural Africans can count on to support the development and transformation of their households and communities.

As we embark on this ambitious plan, one thing is certain: we cannot do it alone. We call upon governments, fellow NGOs, farmer, youth and women’s organizations, research institutions, public and private organizations, and individuals to join us in making interactive radio the powerful force for development that rural Africans deserve.

Kevin Perkins
Executive Director,
Farm Radio International
Our Strategic Intentions

2020 and Beyond is FRI’s five-year strategic plan for making radio a more powerful force for good in rural Africa. The plan sets the goals and strategies that will allow us to:

**BE AN EFFECTIVE AND DYNAMIC ORGANIZATION COMMITTED TO EQUALITY AND INCLUSION**

Making radio a more powerful force for good in rural Africa requires investment in our people, structures, processes and systems. Whether through improved organizational capacity, upholding the communication rights of rural Africans, committing to gender equality, or promoting internal and external learning, we strive to create dynamic and effective Communication for Development initiatives.

**MOBILIZE GREATER INVESTMENT IN INTERACTIVE RADIO FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL AFRICA**

In order to be most responsive to the needs of rural Africans, Farm Radio International will require strong ongoing investment by organizations and people committed to rural development. Individual donations, strategic partnerships, or international funders, a diverse source of revenue — and a steady show of support — will allow us to operate innovatively and effectively in our support for rural communities.

**MAKE INTERACTIVE RADIO AN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION “CHANNEL OF CHOICE” FOR SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

Ultimately, Farm Radio aims to see more Africans of all genders and ages enjoy their communication rights by ensuring they are served with more, and improved, interactive radio programs and services. By working directly with radio stations, we can ensure they craft and broadcast regular, high-quality programming that improves the quality of life for rural Africans and that sparks locally-driven change.
WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

We will operate at three different levels.

First, we will directly connect with as many African radio stations as we can and provide them — from a distance — with resources and services they need to produce and broadcast better rural radio programs. This will include radio content, skills-building services, new broadcasting tools and techniques, and opportunities to connect with and learn from others in their network. By 2025, we will offer these resources and services to over 1,500 radio stations (up from 1,000 in 2020), touching the lives of over 100 million people with improved communication services.

Second, we will engage with development partners like NGOs, civil society organizations, governments, private companies to design and deliver communication for development projects that empower rural families and communities to choose and implement farming, health, nutrition and other practices they consider beneficial. This may include simple agricultural practices that help contribute to better food security or complex changes to the power relationships between genders that underpin gender equality. By 2025, we will reach 40 million rural listeners annually with well-crafted, tailored communication programs with measurable development outcomes in concert with some 200 radio stations that reliably serve these communities.

Lastly, we will work with a select group of radio partners in our network to put in place sustainable year-round interactive radio shows that carry on with or without project funding. These programs are designed to complement public agricultural extension systems and leverage diverse funding sources to stay on the air. By 2025, we aim to partner with 50 stations to offer quality-assured rural radio shows to over 2.5 million rural people every week, At this level we offer millions of listeners regular educational radio programs they can rely on for years, rain or shine.

WHERE WE’RE STARTING

At the start of 2020 Farm Radio International wrapped up our last Strategic Intentions. These are some of our achievements in 2020:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>18 MILLION</strong></th>
<th><strong>3.5 MILLION</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LISTENERS REACHED PER YEAR</td>
<td>LISTENERS CHANGED THEIR FARMING, NUTRITIONAL OR HEALTH PRACTICES PER YEAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1,003</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BROADCASTING PARTNERS IN 41 COUNTRIES</td>
<td>COUNTRY OFFICES</td>
</tr>
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</table>

2.5 million rural people served by a sustainable, year-round, quality-certified station-led interactive radio program

40 million rural people served by a radio project that supports them in making a change in their life.

1,500 radio stations supported and trained to provide better rural radio programs to 100 million rural people.
OUR GOALS

We have set a total of 10 goals to achieve over the five year timeframe of our 2020 Strategic Plan.

1. Advance our expertise in gender transformative, inclusive, and rights-based approaches to Communication for Development.

2. Make Farm Radio a great place to work that earns recognition for ethical, effective, and efficient management.

3. Develop stronger learning and innovation systems so that we contribute to continuous improvement in Communication for Development practice.

4. Strengthen governance through more strategic leadership and oversight by the Board of Directors.

With the aim of becoming an acknowledged leader in effective, dynamic and inclusive administration and management we will:

1. At least double direct funding from public, private, and civil society stakeholders in interactive radio projects and services.

2. Double the number of individual Canadians who support us as regular Farm Radio donors.

3. Continuously increase the number of globally-concerned Canadians who engage with Farm Radio as advocates, champions, volunteers, and/or donors.

With the aim of mobilizing more investment in interactive radio we will:

1. Add to the quality and frequency of the current development-oriented radio services of over 1,500 radio stations in 42 countries of sub-Saharan Africa such that the majority of rural women, men and youth in these countries name one of them as their “channel of choice”.

2. Collaborate with at least 200 select radio stations on the production and broadcast of interactive radio projects that contribute to the quality of life and the empowerment of women in 7.5 million households.

3. Enable at least 50 radio stations to offer new quality-certified Interactive Radio for Sustainable Development programs to at least 2.5 million rural Africans can depend on week after week for as long as they need them.

With the aim of making interactive radio the communication “channel of choice” for Africans seeking sustainable rural development we will:
WE BELIEVE IN COMMUNICATION RIGHTS FOR ALL

A RIGHTS BASED APPROACH

For rural people, an essential tool to fulfill their rights to a livelihood, to good health, to live free of oppression, discrimination, or violence, to confront power imbalances, or gender inequality, to build knowledge on their own, is their right to communicate, as expressed by Article 19.

Yet in rural Africa, many are still not able to actualize their right to access information and express themselves. There may be a lack or absence of channels of communication that reach them, especially in their own language. They may not have the literacy skills to benefit from print. The internet may be inaccessible, too costly to use, or lacking the information they need. With these barriers in place, fundamental communication rights are not realized.

Interactive radio can play an important, if not essential, role in facilitating greater expression of the communication rights of rural Africans — particularly for those whose access to information, ideas, and opportunities to express opinions is most constrained.

COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT

Communication for Development (C4D) is an approach to development that takes into account the many facets of communication, but goes a step further than simply ‘communicating to’ people. Using dialogue, active participation, and collaboration, C4D employs communication strategies to achieve development outcomes. Farm Radio International is a Communication for Development organization, specializing in using interactive radio to achieve sustainable development results. We believe that people should play a critical role in the development of communication programs. Participation and representation matter, especially in decision-making.
How will we achieve our strategic intentions and goals? We’ve identified five “pillars,” or implementation areas, where we will invest and take action in order to get results in our work.

**OUR APPROACH**

- **Strengthen Farm Radio’s policies, systems and structures**
- **Invest in Farm Radio’s human resources so that, as an organization, we thrive**
- **Collaborate with a wide range of diverse stakeholders**
- **Innovate, learn and communicate our results so that we help advance the field of effective communication for development**
- **Deliver excellent initiatives that bring results**
COMMITMENT TO INCLUSION, DIVERSITY AND GENDER EQUALITY

We are committed to the vision of prosperous, just, and vibrant rural people and communities in Africa. This means developing new and better ways of using communication for development to address barriers to the full participation of all citizens in healthy rural life — in particular, those barriers that stem from systems of discrimination and exclusion.

It means transforming — in culturally appropriate and effective ways — the social norms that shape the ways that women and men make decisions, work together and share the costs and benefits of their labour and investments.

It also means working with our partners, governments in particular, to help them fulfil their obligations as duty bearers to enable all citizens access to information and opportunities for expression.

We will also work to ensure Farm Radio workplaces are committed to inclusion, justice, equality and diversity — which means ensuring we have and uphold policies and procedures that support this process.

WHAT IS INTERACTIVE RADIO?

Radio has traditionally been considered a one-way tool for disseminating information, good for telling people what is happening or providing advice. Yet we know that communication works best when it is two-way. That's what interactive radio is all about. We use mobile phone tech, polling apps, and interactive voice response systems, as well as techniques African radio stations themselves have innovated, to turn a one-way radio program into a conversation, sparking dialogues between communities, individuals and the broadcasters themselves, and creating sustainable development in rural communities.
In the Kolda Region of Senegal, women are primarily responsible for childcare. As part of our Scaling Her Voice on Air project, we set out to do programs aimed at improving the lives of women in the area. The women told Farm Radio International that a key struggle in their lives was the health of themselves and their children. Too many children were getting sick, they said, and they blamed poor hygiene and poor nutrition.

Farm Radio partnered with Radio Djimara, and worked with local experts in gender and nutrition, women’s organizations, and community representatives, to design and produce an interactive radio program series that would help listeners learn about and introduce changes that would improve the health of mothers and young children. The program addressed child malnutrition and how to combat it; breastfeeding and maternal health; and hygiene practices: from simply washing hands, to how the whole community handles waste.

A local woman named Diabou Wandia listens to the programs with a community listening group in the community of Saré Demba Diéo.

“We listen as a community, When we listen together, we support each other. We understand better.”

Diabou Wandia  
Head woman of the listening group

After the program ends, the conversation starts.

In Diabou’s group they discuss the topics of the programming, and what they can do in Saré Demba — like starting a vegetable nursery to help with their kitchen gardens and to ensure the good health of their children. They ask each other questions, and they phone in new questions to the radio station to address in the next program.

It’s clear the discussions, and the radio programming, are making a difference.

“Before, when it came to children and infants, protection through washing hands, using water, soap, it wasn’t done,” says Diabou. “Before, there were many children who had diarrhea, but now, thanks to the radio programs and everything around them that we learned, and we try to practice during our housework, it has totally diminished the diarrhea.

“This year, we haven’t seen an infant with diarrhea and that is thanks to the programs.”

This project is supported by The Government of Canada, through Global Affairs Canada.
GET IN TOUCH

We can’t do this alone. We invite partners and individuals and governments to join with us to help make interactive radio the most effective tool it can be to enable rural Africans to live vibrant, just and prosperous lives.

Contact us at info@farmradio.org
Farm Radio international works in partnership with a network of over 1,000 radio stations across more than 41 sub-Saharan African countries. We have offices in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania and Uganda and work closely with our strategic partner Farm Radio Trust in Malawi. In March 2020, Farm Radio International adopted “2020 and Beyond” as its five-year Strategic Plan.

Through it, we will reach over 100 million of rural Africans with life-changing information and opportunities to have a stronger voice in their own development.