Hadizatou Walett Ahmid dropped out of school in sixth grade. It started with skipping class, a practice common among her peers. The 13-year-old lives in Gao, a Malian city on the River Niger around 320 kilometres east-southeast of Timbuktu.

It’s not easy to be a teenage girl at the best of times. In Mali, besides peer pressure, girls face societal barriers to completing their education. Things like household chores, early forced marriage and negative attitudes towards girls’ education make it hard for girls to stay in school. The ongoing conflict in Mali has also led to schools being destroyed and shut down.

According to estimates from UNICEF, only 73.8 per cent of girls are enrolled in primary education, compared to 85.8 per cent of boys. By secondary school, the enrollment rate drops to 15 per cent for girls and 21 per cent for boys.

Yet radio programs being broadcast by eight stations are making a difference. Hadizatou stumbled across a listening session for one of the programs, aired by ORTM Gao, when she was in Gao’s Djidara neighbourhood.

“These episodes taught me about the importance of a girl going to school and finishing her studies,” Hadizatou says. “After losing a year of school, I realized that I could resume my schooling.”

Hadizatou’s parents asked the school authorities to allow their daughter to return to school. They consented. Hadizatou repeated sixth grade and is currently in Grade 7.

“I promise to succeed in my studies. From now on, I commit to raising awareness among my peers about the importance of school,” Hadizatou vows.

Hadizatou is not the only girl influenced by the radio programs.

Seguerema Kassogué is a member of the School Management Committee for the school in the village of Moh Dah in central Mali. She says that parents are not always able to manage the factors that are influencing students — particularly girls — to abandon school. However, the program on Kamba FM is making a difference when it comes to school dropouts.

“Some students had abandoned school, but after the episodes about education, some of those students negotiated to return to school,” Seguerema says. “The return of these dropouts allowed us to retain certain students that were on the point of dropping out.”

By changing girls’ attitudes toward school and addressing the other factors that influence them to drop out, we can build a brighter future for girls in Mali.

The five-year “Défi education des filles au Mali” (DéFi) project is led by Alinea International with funding from Global Affairs Canada.
We are delighted to present to you the Farm Radio International 2022-2023 Annual Report, a snapshot of the remarkable progress and impact we’ve achieved over the past year. In a world that continues to grapple with unprecedented challenges, the dedication and resilience of our team, supporters and partners have been nothing short of awe-inspiring. We have navigated the country-specific and complex realities of economic disruptions, disasters, climate change and conflict with innovation, adaptability and unwavering commitment to our mission: to make radio a powerful force for good in rural Africa — one that shares knowledge, amplifies voices and supports positive change.

In the pages of the report, you can read about:

- The final results of our project that inspired 59% of listeners (1,520,000 people) to try new practices related to gender equality
- The creative radio campaigns in 16 countries that shared vital information about COVID-19 prevention and vaccination
- The On Air Dialogues that polled more than 14,300 Burkinabes and Ethiopians about their experiences with climate change

None of this would have been possible without your unwavering support. Your belief in our vision and your generous contributions have been the driving force behind our accomplishments. Thank you!

Read the full annual report on our website at https://farmradio.org/publications/annual-report-2022-23/

In 2023, Farm Radio International was once again named a Top 10 International Impact Charity by Charity Intelligence, Canada’s “charity watchdog.” This recognition is based on the demonstrated impact per dollar donated. Farm Radio was also included on Charity Intelligence’s list of the top 100 charities in Canada and continues to maintain its 5-star rating from the organization. This recognition is in no small part thanks to the trust awarded in us by our donors, funders and many partners that enable us to make the impact that we do, year after year.
In Uganda, we recently wrapped up a special project that ran the gamut of climate-smart agricultural production, from growing coffee to raising dairy cattle, and from sourcing and planting seeds through to marketing and selling the finished product. Though we are still compiling and analyzing the final results of the “Platform” project, estimates of radio coverage suggest the radio programs covered around 70 per cent of the total Ugandan population.

Our team in Uganda partnered with radio stations in 12 of Uganda’s 146 districts on planning and producing episodes that covered everything from beekeeping to the benefits of agricultural cooperatives. Stations broadcast in the local language of their region.

Each radio station formed part of a district “hub,” which also included subject matter specialists and a coordinator, who coordinated hub activities and linked radio stations to government services that train farmers on agricultural practices. This structure ensured that broadcasters were sharing the latest information on circular and regenerative agriculture practices.

The radio stations used Farm Radio International’s unique Green Leaf Radio Magazine format when designing episodes. This format features different segments that spend time on different topics and stories, like flipping through a magazine. The segments include local and global agricultural news and a question-and-answer segment.

The radio programs’ popularity and impact was evident in the videos of farmers building terraces in their gardens and cultivating coffee using tips from Green Leaf that flooded regularly into our Ugandan office.

One such farmer was Byabazaire Zaveria, a coffee farmer with a large plantation in Masindi District in western Uganda. He wondered why his harvests were so small given the size of his plantation. Byabazaire estimated he only earned half as much money from coffee as other people with the same number of trees.

He was interested in learning modern methods of coffee production and made sure to listen to all the episodes about coffee on Bunyoro Broadcasting Services. Byabazaire says that before listening to the radio program, he did not pay much attention to the spacing of his coffee plants, nor to weeding and stumping his coffee (cutting the main stems off older coffee trees to encourage new growth).

“I have been planting 5×5 feet but now I started planting 10×10 feet,” said Byabazaire. “Weeding and stumping in a coffee garden was not a big deal to me but through listening to the program, I ensure to do everything to ensure that there is no weed in my garden as recommended by experts.”

The Platform project was made possible thanks to the support of the IKEA Foundation.

New project will increase representation and recognition of the work done by unpaid care workers across sub-Saharan Africa

In October, we launched an exciting new project all about unpaid care — informal caregiving like caring for children and the elderly, cooking and cleaning. Members of our project team gathered in Arusha, Tanzania in November to plan a series of On Air Dialogue polls, which will gather Africans’ perspectives on unpaid care, to then bring to national and Pan-African policy discussions. The project, funded by Global Affairs Canada, also includes the production of content resources and guidance for radio stations to broadcast programs about this important, but often overlooked, topic.

Unpaid care matters because it allows us to address a feminist issue that affects marginalized groups from all sectors of society.

Tina Mhaka, Farm Radio International’s gender equality and inclusion officer
LIVING OUR VALUES IN OUR WORK

The values of Farm Radio International are centred by a deep commitment to communication justice. We understand communication justice to exist when the human right to seek, receive and impart information and express ideas and opinions is equitably available to all regardless of frontiers or barriers, as declared in Article 19 of the Declaration of Universal Human Rights.

Respect
At Farm Radio International, we respect the knowledge and wisdom of the women, men, youth and communities we serve in rural Africa. Our founder, George Atkins, travelled the world learning directly from farmers and sharing what he learned. Since then, we’ve shared farmers’ ideas and solutions about everything from raising guinea fowl to climate change adaptation.

Include
At Farm Radio International, we include the people we serve and the African radio stations and broadcasters we work with as active partners in the development of our interactive radio programming, consulting them and other experts before radio programs go on air.

Listen
Listening to the communities and individuals we serve is an essential part of the work of Farm Radio International. We do this using Uliza Interactive, a service through which listeners can call their radio station using their mobile phone. When listeners talk, broadcasters listen to ensure their programs stay relevant.

Amplify
At Farm Radio International, we amplify the voices, perspectives and experiences of rural women, men and youth, especially the most marginalized. On Air Dialogue polls amplify rural people’s voices on a larger scale, gathering their perspectives on key issues to then share with policy makers.

Deliver
At Farm Radio International, we deliver services, trainings and resources to our partner radio stations and broadcasters that they can adapt and apply to their work. These supports empower African broadcasters to provide powerful interactive radio services to their listeners, driving positive change in rural communities.

Learn
At Farm Radio International, we learn from the broadcasters we work with and apply learnings from past projects to improve radio programming. We facilitate online discussions for broadcasters to learn from each other. And we apply those lessons in our own projects, like setting up women-only phone lines so women have a dedicated space to share their opinions.

Read our full statement of values at https://farmradio.org/publications/statement-of-values/