

Linking Agricultural Research and Rural Radio in Africa

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Introduction

This presentation focuses on the experiences of a Rural Radio project as a form of new / old information and communication technology (ICT) and as an organization that can facilitate farmer-extension-research linkages. With radio you can stimulate social learning. Social learning occurs between people, not technologies. Radio offers the advantage that it reaches resource poor people in local languages across long distances and is in line with the oral tradition of many rural people (i.e. building on powerful media like storytelling and singing).

Rural Radio can facilitate linkages between
- farmers,
- extensionists and
- researchers

Globalization of Agriculture: Impact on Research & Extension

Globalization demands new types of relationships (linkages) between researchers and farmers and various intermediaries (NGOs, extension staff, etc.). ICTs, but also new biotechnologies, are changing agricultural research and extension systems. There is a lot of pressure for restructuring and adapting organizations to these changing conditions. The gap between information “haves”, “have nots” and “will nots” widens. That is the agricultural digital divide. This should be of some concern for those who work in extension and research projects.

Social learning occurs between people, not technologies

Why Agricultural Knowledge?

Agricultural knowledge enables rural people to learn about new ways to improve agriculture, and for researchers to learn from rural people. It is a two-way street. Knowledge is critical to generating and sustaining income and employment opportunities. The access to information is the key for marginalized rural people. Women have access to only 10% of agricultural extension programs (World Bank, 1998).

Definition & History

Rural Radio broadcasts to a rural audience. Most often on a relatively local scale (25 – 50 km radius) transmitting at 10 - 100 Watts. Some large transmitters (5000 Watts) can technically reach millions of listeners.

The interaction between farmers and researchers is a two-way street

It is difficult to generalize Rural Radio, usually it is country specific. In the 21st century, Rural Radio has seen many innovations like radio in suitcase and solar energy. But the renaissance of Rural Radio is not only due to technical innovations but also to new organizational roles. Today, we have new roles for Rural Radio like:

- Credit services
- Distance / open learning
- Cultural centres – especially for youth
- Community databases

Rural Radio – A 21st Century Typology

- Government centralized and decentralized radio stations
- Commercial radio stations
- Community radio stations
- National networks and associations of Rural Radio broadcasters

Challenges

1. National policy does not necessarily give sufficient priority and resources to the establishment of community based radio programming and networks.
2. Rural Radio often involves untrained volunteers who have learned by doing, rather than by studying broadcasting techniques such as operating radio equipment, surveying audiences, and compiling radio programmes – they are not trained in agriculture, health, etc.
3. Information is not always readily available to broadcasters, or in a simple style or language easily transmitted to farmers – the “bottom line” of agricultural extension is the quality of its message.

There are important challenges for the future of Rural Radio:

- Policies
- Professionalism
- Information sources

Five Reasons to Link Research and Radio Stations

Often, the linkages between farmers, research, extension and Rural Radio are weak. The figure on the right shows a desirable model for the future. Reasons are:

4. Exchanging knowledge and research findings through Rural Radio to multiple stakeholders: farmers, extension workers, community groups and NGOs, primary, secondary and technical schools and rural businesses.
5. Receiving information on where research products were used and where inputs / services can be obtained.
6. Giving feedback to researchers on the reaction of communities to research activities or results.
7. Collecting information and feedback from communities about their needs for new or improved agricultural technologies and experiences in using existing technologies.
8. Announcing progress on collaborative research / extension / farmer activities including providing information about venues for meetings or visits from outside specialists.

Needed: A Systematic Approach to Linkages

- Identification of needs for linking
- Through training develop appropriate knowledge, attitudes and skills for stakeholder collaboration
- Put in practice new or improved knowledge, attitudes and skills
- Ensure the sustainability of capacity building by following up
- Build networks to support capacity building

Systemic changes are needed

And we need to cause systemic changes. Proximity does not mean partnership!

The relationship between agricultural research and Rural Radio is weak or non-existent within the NARS. Despite public research and radio having the same target audience a disconnect between the two stations of research and radio persists.

A systematic approach to linkages must address partnership attitudes!

The Project (2000 - present)

Four countries: Cameroon, Uganda and Ghana (English), and Mali and Cameroon (French). Each country has a different history with the media and creates different contexts for radio and agricultural extension.

Why start in Africa? Food security is worsening. Radio is still a very important media. In Africa for every 1000 people there were by the late 1990s:

- 12 newspapers
- 52 televisions
- 14 telephone (main)lines
- 5 mobile telephones
- 7.5 personal computers
- 198 radios

Radio is still the most widespread mass media in Africa, by far

The information world is changing but telecentres and access to Internet are still far from the current reality of many rural communities in Africa.

Project Objective

The project aims to develop capacity for agricultural research and Rural Radio linkages. The methodology evolves from knowledge-based action research (multiple data sources, experiential learning method for individual and organizational change: experience, process, generalize, apply...repeat)

Knowledge Based Action Research

1. Situation analysis
2. Needs assessment for research, extension and radio partnership (module 1) – available on the website
3. Training needs and organizational constraints assessed (report & video)
4. Learning material development & workshop (module 2)
5. Resource kit (hard copies & CD-Rom)
6. Team action plans developed and backstopped with support from ISNAR and existing and new partners (e.g. Commonwealth of Learning, OPEC)
7. Team survey of ICT access and use
8. Team visits (electronic and face-to-face)

Steps of action of the Project

CIDA-supported learning materials & resource kits are available under: <http://www.isnar.cgiar.org/activities/radio.htm>

Team Action Plans - Examples

Ghana: Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Radio Peace and District Assembly Extension - Food for life: Sustaining high-yielding sweet

potato production among resource poor farmers in Awutu-Effutu-Senya and Gomoa Districts.

Uganda: Ministry of Agriculture, Budu Broadcasting Service, Buganda Youth Alert and Ministry of Health - Roll back malaria: Neem trees for malaria and its vector control for resource poor farmers in Mukungwe.

Cameroon: Institute for Research for Agricultural Development (IRAD / research and extension branches), Cameroon Radio and Television and SOWEDA Producers Association - Second season maize: An unexploited income generating opportunity for rural women in Fako and Meme Division.

Project Findings – Theory and Practice

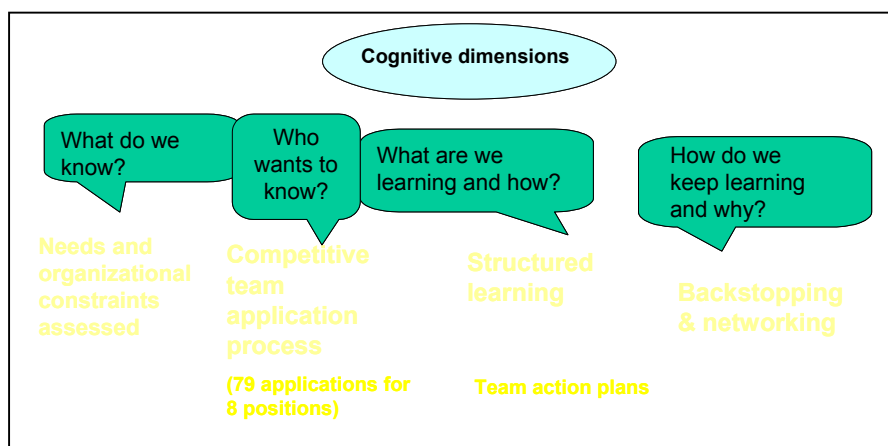
What can we learn about institutions that rarely or never work together? In theoretical terms, linkages are not formed (functionalist view) but learned through social interaction. This is not the same as attending a training course on linkages or establishing a policy. Active engagement of partners is required.

Linkages are not formed but learned through social interaction

Methodology = “Learning to Link”
(See figure on the right).

NARS institutions may have “incomplete” ICT policy from a development communication perspective: a limited perception of radio.

Examining and improving existing farm radio programmes will help to develop new partnerships and facilitate agricultural innovation.



Limitations of the Project

Role of farmer organizations in linking research and Rural Radio requires attention.

There was limited opportunity for comparative field research (contrast experience in other countries and regions, e.g. Asia).

- Future Research Issues**
- **Analysis of national research / radio station partnerships – including benefit / cost analysis**
 - **Partnerships – but also how conflicts among research / extension organizations are resolved**
 - **Advocate role of media in agricultural innovation process**
 - **Strengthen policy and programmes for communication (not just IT) in national agricultural research systems**

Points from Questions and Answers

Questions and Answers

- Comment on the figure with the connection wheel and the farmers in the centre: Everybody wants something from the farmer: a reason to exist. In this figure farmers have a very passive role. They never have a say in the system. First, we have to focus on farmers and understand what empowers them.
- Regarding the situation of extension and research in different countries, no generalizations can be made. You have for instance, NGOs engaged in applied research work and research institutions being pressed to engage in the development application of their scientific results.
- In general, research institutions will not give funds to other institutions (like training, radio or extension). Counter-example from Helen Hambly: Research institutions like ILRI in Kenya may already buy air-time (as long as the money is there). But what we need to talk about is a systemic change, where media are recognized as relevant organizations in the NARS.