

## Engaging Communities with Farm Radio in Malawi

A review by Cathryn Elizabeth Wood

### Abstract

#### *Introduction*

90% of Malawian households are engaged in agriculture, with 81% of the active rural population classified as subsistence farmers – using low input rain fed farming. Most farm plots are not big enough to feed a family.<sup>1</sup> Following a bad corn harvest in 2005, almost five million of Malawi's 13 million people needed emergency food aid and although food security has improved, it is still an ongoing issue of concern, particularly amongst the large population of subsistence farmers.

One method of improving food security and nutrition is through the use of radio to improve knowledge and awareness of better farming practices and to engage and mobilise communities to improve their own food security and nutrition.

The objective of this research was to review the current strategies used to engage communities with farm radio in Malawi and to identify common factors of success and feasibility for widespread adoption (see appendix 2, table 5).

#### *Methods*

The author carried out a qualitative review of different strategies (see appendix 2, table 4) used to engage communities with farm radio in Malawi; exploring the success and challenges of each strategy. The review involved making observations and carrying out interviews with practitioners in Malawi who are actively involved in engaging communities with farm radio and the community of radio listeners.

#### *Results*

Radio producers in Malawi have a strong appreciation of the importance of engaging their community and use a variety of different strategies to engage their community of listeners with farm radio, including:

- the inclusion of community voices on air
  - o pre-recorded interviews with community members (NASFAM, DCRS, MW, MBC, DBU, ZBS)
  - o Live phone-in programmes (DCRS, MW, ZBS)
- Radio listening clubs (DCRS, MW, MBC, DBU)
- participation in production (DBU)
- text alerts and call-outs to listeners (MBC)



*Dzimwe Community Radio Station staff receive new phone-in equipment and training*

#### *Discussion*

The key success factors for community engagement with rural radio include:

- developing a **two-way dialogue** between producers and the community;
- ensuring that the community feel that the radio content is **relevant** to them;
- creating a sense of community **ownership** of the radio programme and/or the radio station.

The development of a **two-way dialogue** between the producers and listeners is very important. This can be achieved through encouraging feedback from listeners and allowing listeners to have a say in how the

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<sup>1</sup> DFID Malawi Country Assistance Plan 2008 - 2011

programme is produced. Feedback can be gathered from radio listening clubs; through holding phone-in programmes and by encouraging listeners to text the programme with their feedback.

Developing a sense of **community ownership** of the radio station and/or the radio programme can be achieved through a number of mechanisms:

- the naming of the programme by listeners (MBC);
- involvement of the community in the development of the radio station/ radio programme; and,
- participation in programme production and the involvement of community members in the recording of programme content (DBU).

**Ownership** is also influenced by the origins and status of the radio station within the community and the production team itself. Notably, the efforts made by the programme producers to engage with the community; their outreach skills and experience, and whether or not they are community members themselves.

If listeners don't believe that a radio programme is **relevant** to them, then they will not listen, so it is vital that radio producers work hard to ensure that programme content is relevant to listeners and also to ensure that listeners perceive that the content is relevant.

Ensuring that **community voices** are included in the programme content is one of the most effective methods of engaging the community because:

- it helps to reassure listeners that the programme content is **relevant** to them;
- listeners are more likely to listen and learn from one of their community members (through peer learning) than from experts; and,
- gathering interviews from listeners (either live or pre-recorded) allows the listeners to interact with producers, give feedback on previous programmes and suggest ideas for future programmes.

*"We were happy to hear our own voices on the radio; we were happy to hear our friends talking on the radio; we were happy to hear our own songs being aired on the radio. It gives us ownership over the whole programme and we feel the radio station belongs to us people."*

*MBC listener from Bernard Village, near Blantyre, Malawi*

## KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

NASFAM	National Smallholder Farmers' Association of Malawi, Lilongwe
DCRS	Dzimwe Community Radio Station, Mangochi
MW	Mudzi Wathu Radio Station, Mchinji
MBC	Malawi Broadcasting Cooperation, Blantyre
DBU	Development Broadcasting Unit, MBC, Blantyre
ZBS	Zodiak Broadcasting Station, Lilongwe
AFRRI	African Farm Radio Rural Initiative, Malawi
SW	Story Workshop, Blantyre
RLC	Radio Listening Club
CRS	Community Radio Station
NGO	Non-governmental organisations

## 1. Background

The qualitative research that makes up this paper was carried out in October 2009. At this time, many of the farm radio producers interviewed by the author were partners of the African Farm Radio Research Initiative (AFRRI). AFRRI is a 42-month action research project supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and being implemented by Farm Radio International, in partnership with the World University Services of Canada (WUSC). It was launched in April, 2007 and its aim is to assess the effectiveness of farm radio on meeting the food security objectives of rural farming households in Africa.

Over the last decade, there has been an explosion in the number of radio stations across Africa – particularly community and commercial FM stations. New techniques such as phone-in shows are making radio an interactive medium, providing farmers with a real voice. The effectiveness of radio in improving food security has not been well studied or documented, and there is a lot to gain by sharing and recognizing best practices<sup>1</sup>.

**AFRRI** is working with five African countries: Malawi, Mali, Tanzania, Ghana and Uganda. In Malawi, AFRRI is working with five radio stations to deliver radio campaigns that aim to help farmers improve their food security (see Table 1). The campaigns address four themes:

- 1) product diversification
- 2) soil and water management
- 3) reduction of post-harvest losses
- 4) marketing of produce

AFRRI is also supporting research to monitor these campaigns in order to find out how radio can provide effective assistance to smallholder farmers in order to help them increase their food security.

**Table 1**

AFRRI partner	Type of broadcaster	Farming terrain	Campaign 1	Campaign 2
MBC (Malawi Broadcasting Corporation)	National state broadcaster	Medium to high altitude	Marketing of products through farmers groups and associations to find reliable markets	Correct production and utilisation of manure
Zodiak Broadcasting Station	Private national broadcaster	Hill farming High altitude	Vetiver grass establishment for hilly terrain that reduces water run-off. Soil and water management issues	Correct production and utilisation of manure (this campaign is relevant to all farmers (not just hill farmers).
Nkhotakha Community Radio Station	Community radio station	Lakeshore	Inter-cropping (rotation cropping) with leguminous crops in order to enhance soil fertility	1:1 maize planting
Mudzi Wathu Community radio station	Community radio station	Plains	Mudzi Wathu were unable to broadcast the first campaign because of problems with the station's transmitter	Promote ideal use for recommended farm inputs e.g. how much fertiliser to use in order to get optimum maize production.
Dzimwe Community radio station	Community radio station	Lakeshore	Increased use of improved maize varieties in order to improve local food security (local varieties have low yields).	1:1 maize planting rather than the commonly used 3:3 maize planting.

### Ongoing monitoring of the campaign.

AFRRI partners are gathering feedback about the campaign by encouraging listeners and case farmers to complete feedback forms and send in letters and texts. In addition, radio listening clubs, community groups which meet to listen to the farming programme, complete a log sheet about the programme, its subject, presenter and give feedback after each programme. Production staff also visit the radio listening clubs to get feedback. Feedback is also sought from extension service officers in order to find out whether agricultural messages contained within the farming programmes are aligned with government messages and to ensure that farmers are not receiving mixed messages.

## 2. Profile of Dzimwe Community Radio Station

Dzimwe Community Radio is based in the district of Mangochi in the Southern Region of Malawi. Established in 1998, Dzimwe Community Radio was Malawi's first Community Radio Station and works closely with listeners to facilitate community development. The Community Radio Station aims to provide a platform for the concerns of the rural communities in order to find solutions that will improve the lives and livelihoods of their community. The Radio Station is staffed by volunteers who receive weekly allowances. Although there is a stable group of core staff with significant experience at the station, they regularly have to train new volunteers because of high staff turnover. The team is highly committed to the Community Radio Station and believe that it fulfils an important role, by enabling the community to raise issues that affect them directly. Dzimwe Community Radio works hard to cover the issues affecting the community, this is illustrated by the way that the station prioritises their news coverage; focussing on local news first, followed by national and then international news.

It is difficult to assess the size of the radio station's listenership. In Mangochi there are 803,602 people<sup>ii</sup> and Dzimwe's transmitter reaches 50% of these people. Research suggests that in areas that can receive Dzimwe programmes, 80% listen to Dzimwe Community Radio. This would suggest that approximately 300,000 people listen to the community radio station. From their work with the community, Dzimwe radio producers believe that women listen to Dzimwe radio more than men, particularly the farming programmes. This is thought to be because many of the men in the Mangochi are fishermen and so women play the primary role in farming.

#### **12 STAFF AT DZIMWE COMMUNITY RADIO STATION**

5 radio producers  
1 Executive Secretary  
1 Station Manager  
4 presenters  
1 technician

The team are able to multi-task and all the programme-makers can produce, present and announce.

*"The community radio station interacts directly with the communities. It is very important that there is interaction between the listeners and the radio. Radio producers should receive feedback from the community. This direct interaction and feedback is difficult for the national stations, because their programming is not specific to their audience."*

Hilda Phirie, Station Manager of Dzimwe Community Radio

Gathering feedback from the community can be challenging for community radio stations because of the limited resources, but the Dzimwe Community Radio team make every effort to do what they can to gather feedback. Encouraging telephone calls from listeners is an

excellent mechanism for gathering feedback because it allows instantaneous engagement with listeners and is cheaper than sending staff to the field. Dzimwe Community Radio Station has telephone conferencing facilities so that staff are able to talk to two or more people on the telephone on air. They need to pay for telephone units but this is still cheaper than transportation. They are also able to speak to experts on air using their telephone system, for example they interviewed the Director of Land Resource and Training who is based in Lilongwe on the telephone and spent \$4 on the telephone call rather than expensive or possibly prohibitive transport costs.

#### **The AFRRRI campaign**

Dzimwe and AFRRRI are working together with the aim of 1) improving the quality of farm radio programming, and 2) providing technological advice in order to improve farming practices and achieve food security. This requires capacity building in broadcast staff, securing adequate equipment and increasing interaction between stakeholders (broadcasters, farmers, experts).

Dzimwe Community Radio broadcasts a programme called "Ulimi Wokhazikika" (Sustainable Agriculture) on Monday and Thursday between 2:00 and 2:30 pm. The programme is a pre-recorded agricultural programme that promotes sustainable smallholder farming practices and food security through drama, poems, documentaries and interviews with experts and farmers.

The programme has a theme or a focus and is usually structured in the following format:

- Interview with farmer (5 min)
- Interview with expert (15 min)
- Drama or music on the programme theme (10 min)

The interview with the farmer deals with his experiences; the problems that he faces and any solutions that he has identified. The programme is usually recorded in the field and edited in the studios, but the producers may also include telephone interviews with experts and farmers.

#### **AFRRRI campaign**

In order to monitor the impact of the AFRRRI campaign, *Dzimwe Community Radio* is working with three impact communities:

- 1) Nsumbi
- 2) Caholay
- 3) Chigonere

Dzimwe staff conducted a baseline survey before the first campaign and found that people from these communities do listen to Dzimwe's farming programmes and tend to follow what they say.

The first AFRRRI campaign with Dzimwe encouraged the farmers to use a hybrid maize that was a more reliable crop. The farmers were reluctant to stop using their old varieties and told the producers that the hybrid maize is unpalatable and has a shorter shelf life when stored. Dzimwe monitored the impact of the campaign and recorded the number of people who had used improved hybrid maize varieties and the number of households that still had maize stored at the end of the season.

In October 2009, Dzimwe started the second AFRRRI campaign which encouraged farmers to plant maize in a different way, by changing the spacing between maize seeds in order to increase yield (1 to 1 maize planting rather than 3 to 3 maize planting).

## Dzimwe's Partnership with AFRRRI

The partnership with AFRRRI has been very beneficial to Dzimwe Community Radio because AFRRRI have provided Dzimwe Community Radio with equipment (including a better system for phone-in programmes), as well as training for station staff for example on using ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies).



Scott from Farm Radio International shows Dzimwe staff how to use the new phone-in equipment.

The partnership has enabled improved communication with farming communities and the increased interaction with the community has been a good way of gathering feedback on programmes. The station's listenership has also been boosted. Farmers are still able to listen to good farm radio programmes and the producers believe that the campaign has also improved food security and people's health. The current focus is on maize, but the techniques that the staff have learnt and used during the AFRRRI radio campaign could be extended to crops and legumes. The AFRRRI project has also built enthusiasm amongst the Dzimwe team and has increased the job satisfaction of producers, which means that staff will be less likely to leave the radio station.

## 3. Strategies used to engage communities with community radio (see appendix 2, table 4)

Radio producers in Malawi use the following strategies to engage communities with community radio:

- Inclusion of community voices on air
  - Pre-recorded interviews with community members (NASFAM, DCRS, MW, MBC, DBU, ZBS)
  - Live phone-in programmes (DCRS, MW, ZBS)
- Radio listening clubs (DCRS, MW, MBC, DBU, SW)
- Participation in production (DBU)
- Text alerts and call-outs to listeners (MBC)
- Pro-actively gathering listener feedback (SW)

### 3.1 Community Voices On Air

#### 3.1.1 Pre-recorded interviews with community members and farmers

The mission of **Zodiak Broadcasting Station** is to give the voiceless a voice and their target audience is the rural people of Malawi. ZBS producers are therefore very aware of the need to include the voices of farmers in their programmes. The producers make considerable effort to travel to the rural areas in order to interview farmers for their programmes.

**NASFAM** producer Andrew Mahiyu believes that listeners are more likely to learn from their peers than experts, so he ensures that interviews with the community are featured in the radio programme that he produces: *Agriculture is Business*.



Mudzi Wathu Radio Producer, Steve Chimutu interviews a contributor.

*"Farmers will follow a message if they hear it from another farmer. If farmers hear that another farmer is doing something different and successful, then they say – if he is doing it, why can't I?"*

NASFAM Radio Producer, Andrew Mahiyu

*"We have moved away from interviewing the experts and now interview villagers because we believe that the villagers have a lot of knowledge to share and have information that will improve our programmes"*

Everess Kayanula, MBC Research Department

#### 3.1.2 Live phone-in programmes

One of the most cost-effective mechanisms of getting the voices of the rural people on air is to invite listeners to telephone the programme and speak to the presenter on-air. Radio producers at *Mudzi Wathu Community Radio Station* in Mchinji consider phone-in programmes to be an effective method of interacting with their listeners.



AFRRI have provided Mudzi Wathu and Dzimwe Community Radio Station with phone-in equipment so that they can carry out phone-in programmes. Following the training with AFRRI and the installation of the phone-in system, AFRRI would have liked Dzimwe to give farmers a toll free number so that farmers could telephone the station in order to ask questions and give feedback. AFRRI wanted to develop a partnership with ZAIN Malawi that would support this initiative, but until a deal was brokered, AFRRI provided funding to create a toll-free number that allowed farmers to call the radio station for free.

Live phone-in programmes are relatively cheap to produce. As long as listeners are prepared to (and can afford to) call, text or 'flash' the programme, then the programme is able to feature listeners. The barriers to this strategy can include the cost of the phone-in equipment and the cost of making telephone calls (if the station needs to call the listeners back).

### 3.2 Radio Listening Clubs

Radio Listening Clubs are community-based organisations that meet to listen to radio programmes and to facilitate development discourse within their own community. Radio listening clubs have a long history in Malawi and early clubs included the farmers' forum listening group project in 1966<sup>iii</sup>.

Story Workshop is a non-profit group educating communities through entertainment media such as radio soap operas and has 50 radio listening clubs across the country. The radio listening groups write diaries detailing: the number of people attending the radio listening club; the date; the issues discussed in the radio programme; the lessons learnt and actions taken.



*Hilda Phirie, Dzimwe Community Radio Station Manager interviews the Nsumbi Radio Listening Club*

Dzimwe CRS have set up 44 radio listening clubs. Dzimwe provided the radio listening club with radio sets, but the radio listening club buy their own batteries. In one of the AFRRI impact areas, Nsumbi, the radio listening club discussed their problems and decided that adult literacy was very poor in their community. The all-women club therefore started moulding bricks in order to build a literacy centre for adult literacy classes and subsequently a donor provided a roof for the building. The women have now built an adult literacy centre as a result of a project that was initiated by the women in the radio listening club.

#### **Interview with Dzimwe's Radio Listening Clubs at Nsumbi:**

##### **How does the radio listening club help you learn more from the radio programme?**

- We are able to learn more from the radio, for example the technological improvements in farming that we are supposed to undertake.
- Before the radio, we had problems but didn't know where to deliver those problems to, now we are empowered to speak.
- People are now more aware of the importance of development, as a result of the community radio programmes. Previously, we were infested with hunger. But after listening to a programme about the need for change, we are now looking for land for farming and doing irrigation farming and so more people have food.
- Before, people in the community would just build temporary buildings but we are now building more permanent housing with cement bricks and roofs in order to create a more sustainable infrastructure.

### 3.3 Participatory radio

The Development Broadcasting Unit (DBU) aims to give community members a platform to air their needs on the state broadcaster, MBC. DBU have three weekly 30-minute programmes on MBC, which vary in subject: access to water, deforestation, HIV-AIDS, climate change, good governance and human rights. Each programme is followed by a 30-minute panel discussion.

DBU engage communities using participatory approaches to encourage dialogue between communities and service providers. The radio listening clubs that DBU have established are encouraged to identify the challenges that they face and prioritise their challenges. DBU train the community to use microphones and recorders and the

community record the programme material without professional support. The community interview each other to record their problems and then identify the service provider who is not delivering their needs. The community members articulate what they need from the service provider and a date is agreed for a meeting between the service provider and the community. At these meetings, the service providers usually agree to meet the community demands that are premised on their rights (to clean water, health provision, etc.). The meeting and the commitments are recorded by the community who give all the recordings to DBU to be edited into a radio programme that is broadcast on MBC. The rural audience like to see results and so the programme needs to be a complete story, including the problem and the solution. However, 30% of community problems are not solved.

DBU has 56 radio listening clubs, at least one in each of the 28 districts. There is a huge demand from the communities to set up radio listening clubs that can record their own radio programmes, but it is a challenge for DBU to provide support for the radio listening clubs because of limited resources.

### 3.4 The use of ICTs: text alerts and call-outs to listeners

MBC are working with AFRRRI to explore how ICTs can be used to reach and encourage villagers to engage with farm radio programmes, as well as maximise the number of listeners.

#### PROCEDURE FOR SENDING SMS TEXT ALERTS

- MBC staff collect details of community members who have mobile telephones: gender, age, role in community, email, access to internet.
- These details are entered into a Frontline SMS software database, which allows research officers to send text messages to a mass audience instantaneously.
- A SMS text message is sent to listeners two hours before the programme saying: "Please listen to the programme at 2:30 and please tell your neighbours."
- After the programme, MBC staff call the listeners who had been sent a text asking: Did you get a text message? Did you listen to the programme? Did you tell anyone else to listen? Did you listen alone or with family and friends?
- The SMS messages are sent online through the South African provider CLICKATEL, which is cheaper than the Malawian providers, TNM and ZAIN.

MBC are trialling the sending of text messaging alerts from broadcasters to community members in order to remind them about the radio programmes.

On Sat 10 Oct 2009, the team sent SMS text messages to 34 people before the programme and telephoned these individuals after the programme. This was the first time in Malawi that broadcasters sent SMS text messages to their listeners. Many people who received the text did listen to the programme and told their friends to listen. One man from Chimbalanga received the text about the programme and got 30 people to come to his house to listen to the programme.

MBC are working with three impact villages (see Table 2 and appendix 1) and hope to increase the number of contact details they have in each community. As detailed in table 2, each impact village is treated differently with regards whether or not they received text messages and how frequently.

**Table 2**

Village	Population	Individuals with mobile phones (as at 10 Oct 2009)	Female	Male	Research group: Frequency of text messages	Successful call backs (Sat 10 Oct 2009)	Number of people who listened to programme	Reasons for not listening
Bernard's Village	less than 300 people	17 clients	10	7	Text messages will be sent every week	16	13	1) no radio; 2) too busy preparing manure but had sent a text to remind her friend to listen; 3) was in hospital with daughter
Maggie's village	400 people	12 clients	5	7	Text messages will be sent for 2 week intervals, followed by a 2 week break	5	4	
Chimbalanga	less than 300	5 people (more names sought)	2	3	Text messages will not be sent.	3	2	

### 3.5 Proactively gathering listener feedback

Story Workshop gather feedback through stratified random sampling: asking people if they have listened to the programme and whether they benefited from listening to the programme. They also hold competitions related to the radio programme, which thousands of listeners across the country enter. At the end of the Story Workshop radio programmes, presenters encourage listeners to text them with feedback on the programmes. One programme received over 100 SMS text messages containing feedback.

#### 4. Barriers to engaging communities with farm radio

- Production Resources
- Community access to resources
- Knowledge and Awareness
- Lack of off-air support
  
- **Production Resources**
  - It can be difficult and expensive for farm radio producers to travel to the farming community who tend to live in remote rural areas that can be difficult to access. Programme budgets do not cover travel costs and producers often have limited resources to work with. Even distances of 10km can become very difficult during the rainy season.
  - Programme makers such as Story Workshop and NASFAM need to purchase airtime from broadcasting channels which can be expensive. For example, 30 minutes of airtime on national radio stations such as MBC or ZBS would cost between 45,000-60,000 Malawian kwacha (up to US\$400). Airtime on community radio stations such as *Dzimwe Community Radio Station* or *Mudzi Wathu Community Radio Station* is cheaper at approximately 6,000 Malawian kwacha (up to US\$40) for a 30 minute slot.
  
- **Community access to resources**
  - In some areas, many people do not own a radio and some radio listening clubs were established in order to provide wider community access to radio.
  - In most of the research areas, women do most of the farming activities (70%). However, women are less likely to have access to a radio than men and so radio stations have established women-only radio listening clubs.
  - According to the ZBS journalist, George Kalungwe, most farmers are not yet using ICT materials such as mobiles and so ZBS has not yet received much listener feedback via mobile.
  
- **Knowledge and Awareness**
  - One of the challenges for programme makers is that they do not know who is listening to the radio because there is very little audience research.
  - Farmers might not consider farm radio to be a primary source of agricultural information and so it is important that farmers are encouraged to engage with radio and see it as a useful tool that can help them learn more about farming techniques.
  
- **Broadcast language**
  - The broadcast language can be a challenge for national broadcasters. Accents and dialects vary across the country and in northern Malawi, not everyone can understand Chichewa.
  
- **Lack of off-air support**
  - Radio programming alone will not lead to farmers adopting new techniques unless there is extra support from technical advisers. If a farmer hears a new technique described on the radio, then they need to be able to ask an agricultural adviser for further advice and support.
  - There is sometimes a danger that listeners could be subjected to two conflicting messages, for example, if a farmer has a good idea that he promotes to his peers during a radio interview that conflicts with government policy or advice.



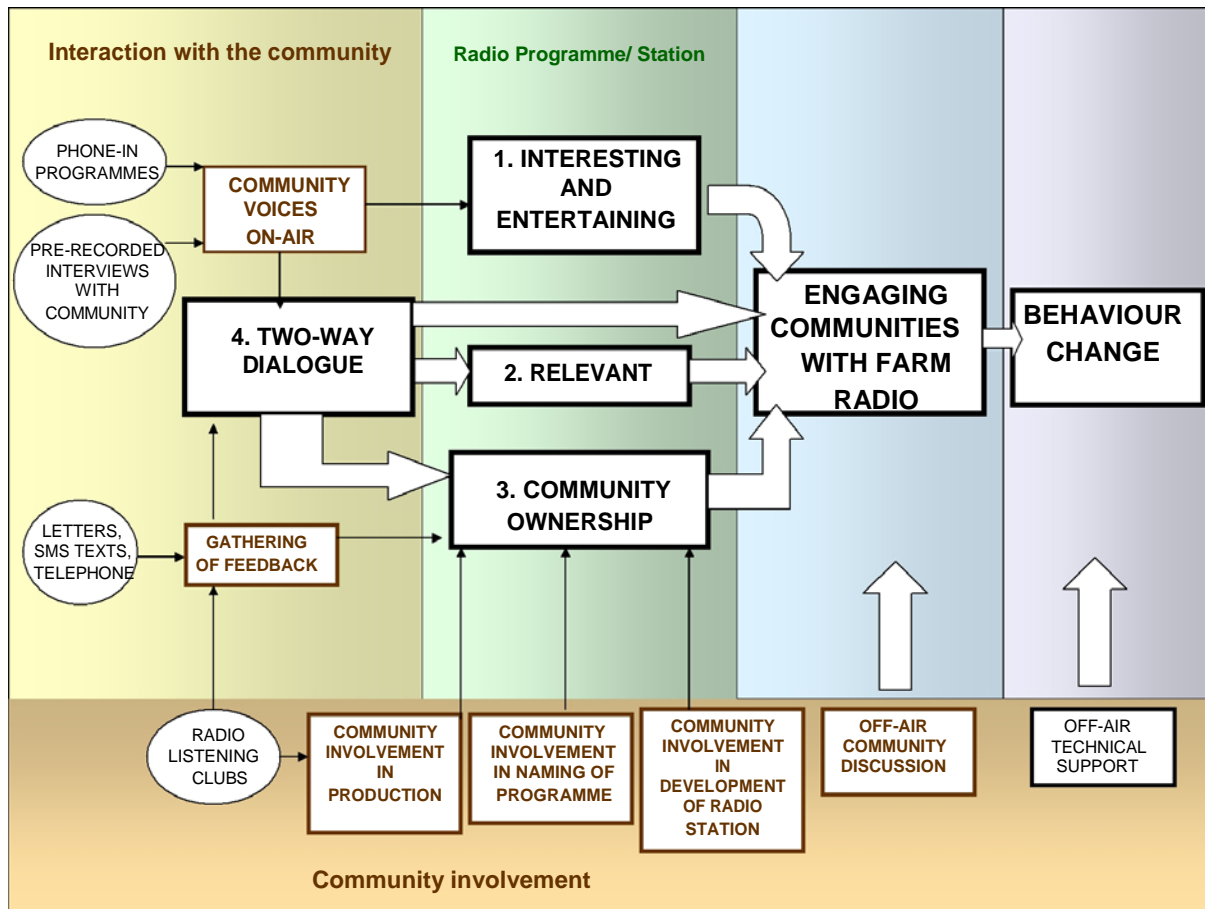
## 5. Success Factors

### 5.1 Interesting and entertaining radio

### 5.2 Relevance

### 5.3 Ownership

### 5.4 Two-way dialogue between the community and programme-makers



### 5.1 Interesting and entertaining radio

*"Radio is not just for education, it also needs to entertain."*

Hilda Phirie, Station Manager of *Dzimwe Community Radio Station*.

If a radio programme is neither interesting nor entertaining, communities will not listen and so will not engage with the agricultural information being conveyed in the radio programme.

### 5.2 Relevance to community needs and interests

Ensuring that the farm radio programmes are relevant to the community's needs and interests is vital. It is important to both ensure that the programme content is judged to be relevant, not only by the Producers, but also by the listeners. Listeners must perceive that the programme is relevant to them, otherwise they won't listen. This can be achieved through a number of mechanisms:

- Ensuring that the programme includes lots of community voices. If listeners hear someone who sounds like them on air, they will believe that the topics of discussion are relevant to them and will be more likely to listen. This effect will be increased if they hear people on the radio programme who have the same accent or dialect as them. Research carried out in Benin<sup>iv</sup> found that the uptake of a new technique for cooking rice was higher in a group of women who watched a video featuring women rice farmers rather than "outsider scientists" compared to a group of women who attended a conventional workshop with a scientist or NGO worker demonstrating the new technique.
- Gathering feedback from listeners that influences future programmes and allows programme makers to improve their programmes.
- Participation in programme production and the involvement of community members in the recording of programme content (e.g. DBU). If community members choose the subjects and themes of the radio programme, it is likely that the programme will be relevant to that community, and other, similar communities.
- Farming is a seasonal activity and so it is important that the radio programmes broadcast seasonally-appropriate information at different times of the year. AFRRRI is working with radio stations to provide farmers with the relevant information when they need it.

### 5.3 Ownership

If a community feel that they 'own' a radio programme or a radio station, then they are more likely to engage with its programmes and programme content. Developing a sense of community ownership of the radio station or the radio programme can be achieved through a number of mechanisms:

- the naming of the programme by listeners (e.g. MBC listeners named the radio programme, Mudzi Obiwilaira);
- involvement of the community in the development of the radio station or the radio programme;
- the ability for listeners to provide feedback on the programme and influence future programming; and,
- participation in programme production and the involvement of community members in the recording of programme content (e.g. DBU).

Ownership is also influenced by the origins and status of the radio station within the community and also the production team; notably, the efforts made by the programme producers to engage with the community; their outreach skills and experience, and whether or not they are community members themselves. If communities work together to establish a Community Radio Station, there tends to be a strong sense of community ownership of the radio station.

### 5.4 Developing a two-way dialogue

A two-way dialogue between the community and programme-makers can also help to engage listeners and helps to ensure that radio programmes are relevant to the audience and that the community feel a sense of ownership of the radio station.

A two-way dialogue between the community and programme-makers can be developed through:

- producers interacting with radio listening clubs;
- holding phone-in programmes;
- ensuring that producers interact with their community; and
- encouraging listeners to text or write to the programme with their feedback.

Gathering feedback enables listeners to have a say in how the programme is produced.

*"It is very important that there is interaction between the listeners and the radio. Radio producers should always gather feedback from the community."*

Hilda Phirie, Station Manager of *Dzimwe Community Radio Station*

## 6. Off-air discussion and support

Radio listening clubs play a particularly important role in helping listeners to engage with farm radio and to understand agricultural messages. Listeners understand the messages better when they are listening to the radio programme in a group because they have the opportunity to discuss what they have learnt after the programme. It is also important that farmers are supported by technical advisers who can provide further advice that supports the new techniques that have been described on the radio programme.

## 7. Behaviour Change

The aim of many of the farm radio programmes is to encourage farmers to adopt better farming techniques i.e. to change behaviour, for example, the AFRRRI campaign is encouraging farmers to improve their farming practices by planting Vetiver grass, by creating farm co-ops, or by using manure correctly. In order to bring about behaviour change, farm radio programmes need to engage the listeners, and this paper details a number of techniques that can promote engagement.

Research suggests that indirect exposure to media campaigns through discussion with other members of the community is very important in bringing about behaviour change. Some evidence suggests that individuals are changed more by discussion of campaign messages than by the direct experience of the campaign message<sup>v</sup>. One study found that members of community groups, such as radio listening clubs, had higher levels of direct exposure to the radio programme and more extensive and diverse social networks, allowing them to serve as a conduit for these messages into the wider community. This meant that the overall reach of a radio programme increased from 50% to 75% when indirect exposure was considered<sup>vi</sup>. One study found that interpersonal reinforcement of messages at the community level can help people to initiate behaviour change<sup>vii</sup>. Although much of this research involved health media campaigns, it is likely that agricultural campaigns would also benefit from community discussion and indirect exposure.



**Signs for Dzimwe and Mudzi Wathu Community Radio Stations**

## 8. Community Radio Stations

Community radio stations are able to address the particular needs of the community that they serve and, given the geographical and demographical advantages, may find it easier to interact with their listeners. Community Radio Stations may also find it easier to reach their Radio Listening Clubs in order to record interviews and gather feedback on their programming. In his 2008 report on communicating via rural radio, Manyozo<sup>viii</sup> found that that radio programmes created by communities attract high listener figures and that community-produced radio programmes motivate communities to take development action.



*Dzimwe Community Radio Station Manager, Hilda Phirie talks to members of Nsumbi radio listening club*

As a former BBC Radio Producer in the UK, my experience was that, despite the rhetoric about the importance of “knowing the audience”, producers were often quite detached from the audiences that they served. My experience in Malawi revealed that Malawian radio producers do not just talk about the importance of knowing and working with their audiences, but actually interact with their audience on many levels and work very hard to engage their communities.

A recent report by Goldsmiths Leverhulme Media Research Centre, commissioned by the Media Trust found that UK communities no longer feel fully served by media outlets. In the context of declining local media provision, many UK communities feel disempowered, unheard and irrelevant<sup>ix</sup>. The report found that communities wanted journalists back at the heart of their communities. In Malawi, Dzimwe Community Radio sits right at the heart of their local community; presenters and producers interact with their community on a daily basis and are recognised by the community as their own community radio station and their own producers. The community feels proud to have a community radio station and engages with the radio output.

<sup>i</sup> Developing Countries Farm Radio Network, AFRRRI Report (2007) Farm Radio International

<sup>ii</sup> Population housing census, preliminary report (2008).

<sup>iii</sup> Manyozo L (2005). Rural radio and the promotion of people-centred development in Africa: Radio Listening Clubs and community development in Malawi.

<sup>iv</sup> *International Journal of Agricultural Sustainability*, DOI: 10.3763/ijas.2009.0438

<sup>v</sup> Hornik, RC (2002d). Exposure: Theory and evidence about all the ways it matters. *Social Marketing Quarterly*, 8(3), 31-37.

<sup>vi</sup> Boulay, M, Storey, JD & Sood, S (2002). Indirect exposure to a family planning mass media campaign in Nepal. *Journal of Health Communication*, 7(5), 379-399.

<sup>vii</sup> Galavotti, C., et al. (2001) Modelling and reinforcement to Combat HIV: The MARCH approach to behaviour change. *American Journal of Public Health*. Volume 91, Issue 10.

<sup>viii</sup> Manyozo, L (2008) Communicating with Radio: What Do We Know? *Findings from selected rural radio effectiveness evaluations African Farm Radio Research Initiative (AFRRRI)*. Farm Radio International Ottawa, Canada.

<sup>ix</sup> Fenton N, Metykova M, Schlosberg J & Freedman D. (2010) Meeting the news needs of local communities. Goldsmiths Leverhulme Media Research Centre, commissioned by the Media Trust

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Profile: AFRRRI and the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC)

MBC is Malawi's state broadcaster. Before the partnership with AFRRRI was established, MBC did not produce any farming programmes in-house, so producing their farming programme *Mudzi Obiwilaira* (Green Village) was a steep learning curve for the MBC producers. It is a research -focussed programme which was also an interesting challenge for producers, who had to carry out research and development in order to find out what the audience were interested in.

*"As broadcasters, you think you know it all, but when you talk to the villagers, you realise you have a lot to learn. It's been very enriching."*

Everess Kayanula, MBC Research Department

### Feedback from the MBC's first AFRRRI campaign (November 2008- May 2009)

MBC monitored the impact of the campaign on three villages. The villages were called "impact communities". The baseline survey in impact communities found that many small holder farmers were growing vegetables with a very short shelf life and were often forced to sell their vegetables at a loss because they preferred to sell the vegetables rather than let them rot. The AFRRRI campaign therefore encouraged communities to create farmers' co-operatives that could negotiate prices as a group, find new markets and manage supply and demand. The baseline study of the three MBC impact communities found there were no farming groups or co-operatives. At the end of the campaign, each of the impact communities had established farming groups. In particular, one of the "impact" villages, (Bernard's village) became a model village with a strong farmers' club that was working to become a formal farmers' co-operative.

### Appendix 2: Tables

**Table 3:** Farming Programmes in Malawi

**Table 4:** Strategies used to engage their community of listeners with farm radio in Malawi

**Table 5:** Feasibility for widespread adoption of strategies used to engage their community of listeners with farm radio in Malawi

**Table 3: Farming Programmes in Malawi**

Organisation		Radio Programme	Description	Producer	Channel	Duration	Language	Format	Broadcast Frequency	Slot	AFRRI partner
National Smallholder Farmers' Association of Malawi, Lilongwe	NASFAM	Agriculture is Business	Encourages farmers to take a more commercial approach to farming	Andrew Mahiyu	MBC	30 min	Chichewa	Pre-recorded magazine	Twice/ week	14:00-14:30 Monday and Saturday	NO
Dzimwe Community Radio Station, Mangochi	DCRS	Ulimi Wokhazikika (Sustainable Agriculture)	Promotes agricultural issues and better farming practices	Justice Sumaili	DCRS	30 min	Chichewa	Pre-recorded magazine	Twice/week	14:00 - 14:30 Monday and Thursday	YES
Mudzi Wathu Radio Station, Mchinji	MW	Katani Kambwiri (Hod the hoe)	Promotes agricultural issues and better farming practices	Steve Chimutu	MW	30 min	Chichewa	Pre-recorded magazine	Twice/week	13:00 – 13:30 Tuesday and Thursday	YES
Malawi Broadcasting Cooperation, Blantyre	MBC	Mudzi Obiwoira <sup>1</sup> (Green Village)	Promotes agricultural issues and better farming practices	Everess Kayanula, MBC Research Department	MBC	30 min	Chichewa	Pre-recorded magazine programme including drama, songs, vox pops	Once/week	14:30-15:00 Saturday	YES
Malawi Broadcasting Cooperation, Blantyre	MBC	The Green Torch	Technical advice for farmers	Various	MBC	5 min	Chichewa	Interview with an expert	Once/week	05:10-05:15 Friday	N/A
Development Broadcasting Unit, MBC, Blantyre	DBU		Participatory; community-led programme	Hamilton Chimala	MBC	30 min	Chichewa	Pre-recorded documentary	Once/week		NO
Zodiak Broadcasting Station, Lilongwe	ZBS	Tlimi bwanji? (How do we farm?)	Variety of radio items about farming, usually recorded in the field	George Kalungwe	ZBS	30 minute	Chichewa	Magazine format			NO
Zodiak Broadcasting Station, Lilongwe	ZBS	Mlere Nthaka (soil conservation)	Promoting agricultural technologies that will improve food security	George Kalungwe	ZBS	30 minute	Chichewa	Magazine format	Twice/week	18:30-19:00 Friday and 16:30-17:00 Tuesday	YES
Story Workshop					MBC	30 min	Chichewa				NO

<sup>1</sup> Mudzi Obiwoira was named by MBC listeners



**Table 4: Strategies used to engage their community of listeners with farm radio in Malawi**

Organisation		Radio Programme	Pre-recorded interviews with the community	Live phone in programmes	Radio listening clubs	Number of radio listening clubs	Participation in production	Text-alerts and call-outs	Pro-actively gathering listener feedback (through text message/ letters)
National Smallholder Farmers' Association of Malawi, Lilongwe	NASFAM	Agriculture is Business	√						
Dzimwe Community Radio Station, Mangochi	DCRS	Ulimi Wokhazikika (Sustainable agriculture)	√	√	√	44			√
Mudzi Wathu Radio Station, Mchinji	MW	Katani Kambwiri (Hod the hoe)	√	√	√	30+			√
Malawi Broadcasting Cooperation, Blantyre	MBC	Green Village / Mudzi Obiwiloira	√		√			√	
Development Broadcasting Unit, MBC, Blantyre	DBU		√		√	56	√		
Zodiak Broadcasting Station, Lilongwe	ZBS	Tlimi bwanji? (How do we farm?)	√	√	√				
Zodiak Broadcasting Station, Lilongwe	ZBS	Mlere Nthaka (soil conservation)							
Story Workshop	SW		√		√	50	√		√

**Key for table 5:**

√√√ High

√√ Medium

√ Low

\$\$\$ Expensive

\$\$ Medium

\$ Cheap

**Table 5: Feasibility for widespread adoption of strategies used to engage their community of listeners with farm radio in Malawi**

Strategies	Impact on ensuring radio programme is entertaining	Impact on ensuring radio programme is relevant	Impact on development of two-way dialogue	Impact on encouraging listeners to feel ownership over the radio programme	Impact on community engagement with farm radio	Production staff time	Difficulty/practicalities	Cost and affordability	Reach as compared to investment	Overall cost / benefit assessment
Pre-recorded interviews with farmers	√√	√√√	√√√	√√	√√√	\$\$\$	\$\$\$	\$\$\$	\$\$\$	An important method of engaging listeners, yet can be prohibitively expensive and difficult
Live phone in programmes	√√	√√√	√√√	√√	√√√	\$	\$	\$	\$	Inexpensive yet effective method of engaging listeners
Radio listening clubs	√√	√√√	√√√	√√√	√√√	\$\$\$	\$\$	\$	\$\$\$	Effective, inexpensive method of engaging listeners, but requires large investment of staff time, particularly initially, but can reap large rewards
Participation in production	√	√√√	√√√	√√√	√√√	\$\$\$	\$\$\$	\$\$	\$\$\$	Large investment of staff time and resources required
Text-alerts		√	√√	√√	√	\$\$	\$ (high initial investment)	\$\$\$	\$	Insufficient evidence to justify investment
Pro-actively gathering listener feedback (through text message/ letters)	√√	√√	√√	√√	√√	\$\$	\$	\$	\$	Important, inexpensive method of gathering feedback

