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**Online Discussion:**

**Rural radio and community media: empowering rural youth for resilient livelihoods and improved food and nutrition security**

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1. **Submitted:** on February 11, 2015 to: **Mauricio Rosales** (FAO) and **Oumar Seck Ndiaye** (AMARC-Africa), Facilitators of the discussion**,** Email: FSN-moderator@fao.org
2. **Contributor:** Dr. Santosh Kumar Mishra,Technical Assistant, Population Education Resource Centre, Department of Continuing and Adult Education and Extension Work, S. N. D. T. Women's University, Patkar Hall Building, First Floor, 1, Nathibai Thackerey Road, Mumbai-400020, Maharashtra, India. **[Email:** drskmishrain@yahoo.com **Tel.:** +91-022-22066892 (O) **Skype:** mishra5959 +91-022-28090363 (R) +09224380445 (M)**]**

**1. In your experience, what's the role of community media and rural radio in promoting resilient rural livelihoods and improving food security and nutrition of communities in West Africa? Do you think that radio programming in West Africa engages young audiences on these topics?**

**1.1 In your experience, what's the role of community media and rural radio in promoting resilient rural livelihoods and improving food security and nutrition of communities in West Africa?**

Radio continues to have a broad reach in Africa. The African Farm Radio Initiative (AFRRI) is one example of role of community media in improving food security and nutrition of communities in West Africa. The AFRRI was a 42-month action research project implemented by Farm Radio International (FRI) in partnership with World University Service of Canada (WUSC), and with the support of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. It was created to fill a knowledge gap. Prior to AFRRI, there was little solid evidence to confirm that rural radio has the capacity to improve food security in Africa. AFRRI set out to test the effectiveness of a new type of radio campaign developed by FRI: the participatory radio campaign (PRC). Working with partner radio stations in five African countries – Tanzania, Uganda, Mali, Ghana, and Malawi – AFRRI created a series of farm radio programs designed to educate farmers, and enable them to improve their agricultural practices. Farmer listeners were central to the development and implementation of the radio campaigns. AFRRI’s PRC model allowed farmers to participate at every level in the process. As a preliminary step, AFRRI identified active listening communities (ALCs) for each of its 25 partner radio stations. Farmers in the ALCs were surveyed about their local agricultural practices and unique needs, as well as their radio listening habits. They then became central players in the design of a series of radio programs geared to address a particular agricultural practice that farmers deemed would help to improve their livelihoods, and ultimately their food security.

AFRRI coordinated the development, broadcast, and evaluation of two “rounds” of PRCs, called PRC1 and PRC2 by each participating station. It is estimated these PRCs reached approximately 40 million farmers in five different countries. The first round of PRCs was completed in mid-2009 and the second round of PRCs concluded in June 2010.

There were three key elements to the AFRRI project:

* *ICT-enhanced radio*: AFRRI wanted to test how new information and communications technologies (ICTs) could be integrated with radio to provide better two-way communication between radio stations and their farmer listeners. To this end, each partner radio station was equipped with one of eight customized ICT packages to enhance their PRCs. Some radio stations were provided with desktop computers and internet access, for example. Other stations were offered portable digital recording and editing equipment which enabled them to interview farmers and agricultural experts on location, rather than in studio. Other technologies included wireless networks, call-in and call-out facilities, and satellite terminals (VSATs).
* *Radio-based MIS*: Preliminary research in 75 communities indicated that smallholder farmers required and demanded better access to market information in order to enhance their individual food security. Approximately 80 per cent of farmers engaged in early participatory rural appraisals (PRAs) identified MIS as a need. Using the PRC model and with support from the ICT enhancements, AFRRI designed its MIS pilot project to better understand how radio could enhance traditional marketing information service (MIS). The project consisted of individual MIS radio campaigns in:
1. *Mali,*
2. *Uganda,*
3. *Tanzania, and*
4. *two in Ghana.*
* *Participatory radio campaigns*: At the outset of the initiative, the AFRRI team reviewed many different approaches to agricultural radio in Africa. The radio campaign approach seemed suited to the research project because they take place over a defined period of time, and they have specific and measurable objectives. In order to make farmers central to the research process, however, AFFRI wanted to create a new model of campaigns that was participatory and bottom-up, rather than the top-down approach of traditional radio campaigns.

The concept of a participatory radio campaign (PRC) was developed. PRCs are farmer-centred radio programs. Farmers participate in selecting the focus (or topic) of the radio campaign, choose the time of broadcast, and are intimately engaged in the ongoing development of the farm radio programming over a set number of weeks; including as central agents of the knowledge-sharing process. Lively and entertaining formats are designed to attract listeners.

The purpose of a PRC is to help farmers evaluate, and make informed decisions about, a new agricultural practice or improvement. Throughout the multiple week radio series, farmers share information about the specific agricultural improvement on-air; they are supported in this process by the radio station staff. Staff provided participating farmers (and all listeners) with additional information on the agricultural practice, sometimes even sourcing the physical resources required to help them implement the agricultural improvement.

PRCs are implemented in stages with a number of key steps:

* *Community rapid appraisals:*In AFRRI, participatory rapid appraisals (PRAs) were conducted in 100 communities, (four per participating radio station, each typical of the area served by the radio station). These appraisals gathered information about what farmers need and how farmers use radio.
* *Improvement selection:* The AFRRI engaged knowledge partners, including farmers, to help identify established agricultural practices that had been evaluated and found to have an impact on food and nutrition security for resource-poor, rural farmers. The project favoured agricultural improvements that were quite simple and could be implemented with available resources to better ensure uptake by smallholder farmers. Agricultural improvements were as varied as the farmers’ needs, and included disease-resistant varieties of cassava, apiculture, animal enclosure, composting, mulching, intercropping, controlling pests with neem extract, improved varieties of upland rice, shea nut production and processing, and others.
* *Formative research:*Through focus group discussions, information was gathered about the target audience’s knowledge, attitude, and behaviour/practices (KAPs) regarding the agricultural improvement; their radio listening habits; and their preferences with regard to radio program style and treatment. Organizations that provide agricultural education and related products and services were identified as potential partners.
* *Campaign design:*Workshops brought together radio staff, farmers, extension workers, local NGOs, and others, to design a four-to-six-month-long radio campaign for each partner radio station.
* *Broadcast:*Radio campaigns were broadcast at a reliable, predictable time, a time that farmers had identified as convenient listening times. Each PRC included four stages, with farmers at the centre of each stage:
1. The radio campaign was launched by identifying the agricultural improvement for the listening audience;
2. The agricultural improvement was discussed on-air, in relation to the needs and practices of local farmers;
3. Radio programming encouraged farmers to make an informed decision about adopting the agricultural improvement; and
4. The radio campaign continued with discussion on-air (among farmers, extension workers, and other specialists) on how to implement the improvement, including troubleshooting of any problems encountered, and how to access required physical resources.
* *Gathering Listener Feedback:*Through logs of each PRC episode, analysis of listener feedback (letters, SMS, e-mails, calls-in, etc.), focus group discussions (with adult men, women, and youth in listening communities), and detailed observations of “case farmers” (three per radio station), radio campaigns were assessed for their progress against objectives so that mid-course corrections could be made.

One of the hoped-for results of a successful PRC is increased knowledge among farmer listeners of the promoted agricultural practice by the end of the radio campaign; the optimum anticipated result is the adoption of the agricultural improvement by members of the listening audience, with the evidence-based expectation that the agricultural practice will improve their household food security.

Approximately 40 million smallholder farmers were served by radio programs conducted as part of AFRRI’s two rounds of PRCs. If the survey findings from the PLCs are applied across the potential audience, it is estimated that 20 million learned about the promoted agricultural improvement, and 10 million adopted one or more of a wide range of improved farming innovations as a result of these PRCs.

The AFRRI was a research initiative, intended to gather and share data to fill a knowledge gap. The project demonstrated that participatory radio campaigns are widely listened to and have a significant and measurable impact on knowledge and practice in farming communities that can access them. They represent a proven methodology for taking agricultural innovations to scale at a very low cost per farmer.

While the AFRRI answered many questions, many more remain to be investigated. It is important, for example, to track and measure the long-term impact of PRCs – something FRI will be able to do with the “AFRRI-2” grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Radio formats and methodologies other than PRCs can be implemented and monitored to determine the efficacy of different types of farm radio in improving food security; it may also help to determine why some PRCs in the AFRRI study proved to be more effective than others in this regard. PRCs can be used to scale-up agricultural initiatives, particularly those taking a value chain approach. This approach has the potential to enable millions of African smallholder farmers to understand, evaluate, make informed decisions about, and put into practice, innovations that advance their food security.

**1.2 Do you think that radio programming in West Africa engages young audiences on these topics?**

Community radio is a type of radio service that offers a model of radio broadcasting beyond commercial and public service. Community radio broadcasting serves geographic communities and communities’ interest. The content of broadcasting is largely popular and relevant to a local/specific audience but which may often be overlooked by commercial or mass-media broadcasters. Community radio stations are operated, owned, and driven by the communities they serve. Community radio is not-for profit and provides a mechanism for facilitating individuals, groups, and communities to tell their own diverse stories, to share experiences, and in a media rich world to become active creators and contributors of media. In many parts of the world today, community radio acts as a vehicle for the community and voluntary sector, civil society, agencies, NGOs and citizens to work in partnership to promote community development. By the core aims and objectives of this model of broadcasting, community radio stations often serve their listeners by offering a variety of content that is not necessarily provided by the larger commercial radio stations.

Community radio can play a significant role at the grass roots level for rural development. For instance, issues of poverty, agriculture, gender inequality, education, social problems among others could be the focus for programming. In exploring the importance of sharing information locally and the opening up of wider information networks for farmers in Northern Ghana with reference to vernacular radio programs, Chapman et al  (2003) found that rural radio is effective in improving the sharing of agricultural information by remote rural farming communities. Radio in this regard provides a set of participatory communication techniques that support agricultural extension efforts by using local languages to communicate directly with farmers and listeners’ groups.

Through media skills training and access to the airwaves, a community radio facilitates a number of capacity building activities. The exchange of information, networking of groups, the provision of skills and training and these undoubtedly are key elements of developing a community. Again, a radio facility for a community facilitates the promotion of awareness of community groups and facilities in the area as well as providing the avenue for the empowerment of these groups to use radio to promote themselves and to speak directly to the community. For its proximate location to its clients a Community Radio serves a local community of its interest. It is accessible to the community in terms of ownership, decision making and program output. In majority of cases, programming is produced by the community, with focus on local concerns and issues. Unlike in the case of the mainstream media, rather than merely talking about the community, the people themselves make the programs. This strengthens local culture with the recognition that this is their station; it becomes a forum for a wide diversity of local opinions and views.

Simli Radio is a community radio station located in a small rural community, Dalun, within the Tolon-Kumbungu District of the Northern Region of Ghana. It was established in 1996 under the Ghanaian Danish Community Programme (GDCP), an integrated rural development programme. The overall strategy of GDCP has been to promote integrated rural development that will create an enabling environment for constructive dialoguing between duty bearers and rights holders; thus giving voice to the vulnerable and excluded to demand for and claim their rights. Simli Radio was established to complement the efforts of the first three sectors (Community Projects, Dagbon Ninneesim Karim Zong (DNK), and Simli Pong (SP)) by giving more information on the activities of the GDCP, recording the gains made, and performing the role of an extension education unit. The Radio is located about 37 km away from Tamale, the capital of the Northern Region, in Dalun. The sector was also funded by Danida till the end of December 2008 when it became totally independent.

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| *Box-1:* PDEV II Youth Radio Show in Burkina FasoTwo developments in March 2014 have provided listeners of PDEV II Burkina’s by-youth-for-youth radio magazine program Manegr Sore (“Voices of Change”) with new ways to engage and interact with the themes discussed in the program. The installation of an Interactive Voice Response (IVR) call and message system empowered listeners to make toll-free calls to hear information about the program and leave their feedback, while a PDEV II training in interactive programming for broadcast partners launched a series of call-in, live broadcast quiz shows hosted by local radios following PDEV II broadcasts that have seen an enthusiastic response from local listeners.Participation in the quiz-shows and IVR calls have also enabled the media team to better understand their audience. While the show is much appreciated by its target demographic of youth between the ages of 15 and 35, the advice imparted on themes of autonomy, job skills, tolerance and civic participation are reaching a wider range of listeners and families. One such listener is Mathias Kabrem a 54-year old resident of Nagrin, who is blind and works as a weaver. |

*Further,* Somali Voices Radio Program has connected families, fosters dialogue on tough issues. Internews has established three community radio stations in Somalia, in partnership with Star FM, a Nairobi-based Somali language radio station. Somali Voices, a radio program started by Internews to give voice to different groups including local government, civil society organizations, youth, and IDPs, is one of the most popular programs broadcast on the stations. Government officials have also been guests on Somali Voices. One program featuring the secretary of Kahda administration resulted in funding for the district, which had been suffering from a lack of attention from the Mogadishu administration.

**2. What kind of issues have to be raised through rural radio and community media when it comes to youth challenges in West Africa? What is the role of young radio broadcasters?**

**2.1 What kind of issues have to be raised through rural radio and community media when it comes to youth challenges in West Africa?**

Rural radio and community media need to address following issues related to youth:

* *Investment priorities for youth development,*
* *Investment priorities for education,*
* *Train, retrain and recruit teachers (In order to ensure that the quality of education provided is up to acceptable standards),*
* *Review educational curriculum,*
* *Research, science and technology,*
* *Invest in girls’ education,*
* *Train skilled vocational and career guidance counselors,*
* *Create scholarships for deserving young people,*
* *Promoting non-formal education,*
* *Investment priorities for employment,*
* *Support youth entrepreneurship,*
* *Provide an enabling environment for businesses to thrive,*
* *Enact policies that protect youth in the work place,*
* *Social entrepreneurship programs,*
* *Investment priorities for health and HIV/AIDS,*
* *Integrate HIV/AIDS into education curriculum,*
* *Train and engage young people as peer educators to stop AIDS and pregnancy,*
* *Youth friendly health services,*
* *Strengthening the health sector,*
* *Childhood, infectious and other diseases, and*
* *Link education system to formal employment.*

**2.2 What is the role of young radio broadcasters?**

Any radio station that claims to be serving the interests of the community and representing the democratic values of a society, has to integrate children and youth into their programming. It is not just an issue of programming ‘for the children’ (something that usually adults do), but allowing the young to express their voices and acquire little by little the experience and commitment that will make them opinion leaders and responsible citizens.

The fact that children take in their hands the radio waves is a logical consequence of any democratization process. Young people may not vote, and many of their rights may be restricted because of their age, however they are the pivotal force in any society that looks ahead for 10 or 15 years. The more responsibilities they have in participating in community life, the more today’s children will become leaders of tomorrow’s communities and nations.

Young people still have many attributes that, often, adults have lost : integrity, optimism, faith in the future, commitment to human values, creativity, enthusiasm. Providing them the opportunity to communicate these values and attitudes through radio, will benefit the ensemble of the society.

**3. How can positive rural radio experiences with regards to food and nutrition security and resilient livelihoods be scaled up and made sustainable? What capacities and enabling factors have to be put in place (e.g. policy frameworks)?**

**3.1 How can positive rural radio experiences with regards to food and nutrition security and resilient livelihoods be scaled up and made sustainable?**

Rural radio can make significant difference. This initiative can create desired awareness and bring in changes. Several projects in this direction have been successfully implemented. For instance, in the year 2012, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) began the Knowledge for Forests project, to mobilize support and pledges for the Bonn Challenge target to restore 150 million hectares of deforested and degraded lands by 2020.

Farm Radio International is helping IUCN to meet the goals of this and related Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) projects in Uganda by using participatory radio strategies to raise farmers’ awareness of the opportunities and benefits of restoring degraded land. Techniques which are used in FLR include: tree planting, use of soil trenches, kitchen gardens and mulching. Working closely with IUCN, the Uganda team has conducted formative research, selected Kapchorwa Trinity Radio as its partner radio station, and trained the broadcasters in participatory radio and use of ICTs.

**3.2 What capacities and enabling factors have to be put in place (e.g. policy frameworks)?**

**Food security means that all people at all times have physical & economic access to adequate amounts of nutritious, safe, and culturally appropriate foods**, which are produced in an environmentally sustainable and socially just manner, and that people are able to make informed decisions about their food choices. It also means that the people who produce our food are able to earn a decent, living wage growing, catching, producing, processing, transporting, retailing, and serving food.

At the core of food security is access to healthy food and optimal nutrition for all. Food access is closely linked to food supply, so food security is dependent on a healthy and sustainable food system. The food system includes:

1. *production,*
2. *processing,*
3. *distribution,*
4. *marketing,*
5. *acquisition, and*
6. *consumption of food.*

A healthy, sustainable food system is one that focuses on environmental health, economic vitality, and human health & social equity, as shown the in the following graph:



*“Framework for Sustainable Food System”*

* ***Environmental Health:*** ensures that food production and procurement do not compromise the land, air, or water now or for future generations.
* ***Economic Vitality:*** ensures that the people who are producing our food are able to earn a decent living wage doing so. This ensures that producers can continue to produce our food.
* ***Human Health & Social Equity:*** ensures that particular importance is placed on community development and the health of the community, making sure that healthy foods are available economically and physically to the community and that people are able to access these foods in a dignified manner.

**Academic Profile of Contributor Dr. Santosh Kumar Mishra**



I am researcher & demographer employed (since August 1987) with the Population Education Resource Centre (PERC), Department of Continuing and Adult Education and Extension Work, S. N. D. T. Women's University, (SNDTWU, <http://sndt.ac.in/>) located at Mumbai in India. I underwent training in demography from the IIPS, Mumbai, India (<http://www.iipsindia.org/>) & acquired Ph. D. in 1999. Also, I completed Diploma in Adult and Continuing Education & HRD, and Certificate Course in Hospital & Health Care Management. My subject areas of interest / research include: population & development education, issues pertaining to population-development linkages, education for sustainable development, adult & continuing education/non-formal/extension education, etc. Responsibility at the PERC, SNDTWU is assistance in: (a) *research studies*, (b) *training/ orientation for various levels of personnel*, (c) *curriculum developmen*t, (d) *material production / publication*, (e) *monitoring/ evaluation,* and (f) *other extension program on population education & allied subjects.* My work experience includes:

* helping PERC in research studies, material preparation, data collection, documentation & dissemination, preparing reports, organizing training/orientation programs/workshops, monitoring & evaluation of population education programs, and curriculum design;
* publications (articles, technical papers, etc.);
* contribution of papers in national and international seminars/ conferences; documentation and dissemination of population information;
* review of papers for national and international journals (in the capacity of reviewer / editor);
* review of conference sessions;
* preparation of educational materials (print version) for other organizations,
* assistance in preparing evaluation tool; (h) assistance in evaluation of Ph. D. theses, dissertations & projects reports;
* editing and proofreading of book, book chapters, etc.; &
* mentoring students in their studies & counseling students & parents in career planning matters during informal interactions – both at workplace and outside.

I am Reviewer/Editorial Board Member for over 40 international journals. I have also reviewed papers for 7 international conference sessions, including EURAM 2014 Conference (4-7 June 2014, University of Valencia, <http://site.aace.org>). I have authored (some co-authored) 5 research studies (published by SNDTWU); 32 papers for national conferences & 11 papers for international conferences; 5 handbooks/booklets (published by the SNDTWU); 5 books, & 11 book chapters. In addition, I have 32 articles published in national journals and 22 in international journals, besides 2 monographs. I was awarded Government of India fellowship at the IIPS & travel scholarship for sharing my research views at international conferences and summits held in:

* *Pakistan,*
* *Tanzania,*
* *Sweden,*
* *USA,*
* *Tajikistan,*
* *Australia, &*
* *Philippines.*

I am Advisory Board Member of the American Academic & Scholarly Research Center (<http://aasrc.org/?page_id=38>) and Reviewer-cum-International Advisory Board Member for the AASRC 2013 International Conference-Beirut, Lebanon (http://aasrc.org/conference/? page\_id=803). I can be reached at: **Email:** drskmishrain@yahoo.com, **Skype:** mishra5959, & **Tel.:** +91-022-22066892 (O) +91-022-28090363 (R) +09224380445 (M).