

Chapter 5

Education and Training on Communication

Mali: Rural Radio by Riccardo Del Castello

1. Background

Communication is essential to rural development, all the more so with the importance now attached to grassroots participation and sustainable development. Despite the technological advances in the communication field, radio is still the most pervasive, inexpensive, popular and socio-culturally appropriate means of communication in many parts of the developing world. Particularly in Africa where the majority of people live in rural areas, radio is a vital communication tool. Often it is the only medium available for disseminating rapidly to large and remote audiences, critical information about markets, weather, crops and livestock production and natural resource protection. Rural radio can motivate farmers, promote the exchange of views and draw their attention to new agricultural production ideas and techniques. It implies a two-way process, which calls for the active participation of the communities in the planning and production activities of the radio broadcasts. It is the expression of the community rather than a channel for the community.

Thanks to its wide coverage rural radio also brings people closer together, stimulates information, and enhances the value of local know-how. Programme production is relatively simple and local stations can easily create their own content which often goes beyond agricultural issues to address a wide range of social, educational, health-related and cultural issues.

FAO has supported African countries in developing rural radio for more than 20 years and has drawn up a methodology based on the involvement of the different sectors of rural development in the definition and implementation of programmes. Interdisciplinary production teams work together to ensure that programme topics are relevant and are based on the real information needs of their audiences. Therefore production units must work with rural populations and often broadcast directly from the field. Mali is also one of the countries where FAO's assistance to rural radio has been instrumental in promoting the use of radio for the development of rural areas. Through the Technical Cooperation Programme, and in particular through the activities carried out within the context of TCP/MLI/2355 "Relance de la Radio Rurale", similar initiatives were implemented by other organizations and attracted donor investments. A direct result of this was the project MLI/020/NET "Relance de la Radio Rurale au Mali (phase II)", implemented by FAO from 2001 to 2003 with funding from the Government of the Netherlands. The project yielded

considerable results in terms of programme quality, effectiveness, capacity building and sustainability.

TCP/MLI/2355 – *Relance de la Radio Rurale- Phase I*

After 25 years of existence, marked by various periods of ups and downs, Rural Radio in Mali saw a new rebirth starting in 1993, backed by strong political will to promote the development of the rural world through radio and by the commitment of local rural communities to contribute to their own development by sharing knowledge and information.

Since its independence in 1960, the Republic of Mali lived through thirty years of government propaganda disseminated by the national radio and television network, and with *L'ESSOR*, the national newspaper, to carry out the government's media show, and its mobilisation of public opinion. At the beginning of 1991, Radio Mali only covered 60 percent of the country's territory, and *L'ESSOR* was read by less than 5 percent of the population, and both continued to completely ignore the nationwide need for information and communication, as well as the linguistic and cultural diversity of the nation's minorities. After March 1991, the country's new political authorities put an immediate halt to the Government's outright monopoly of media and a new era begun, particularly in the radio sector. Ten years later, in the year 2000, there were more than 120 radio networks broadcasting in Mali.

It is within this context that the Malian Government requested FAO's assistance to provide equipment and training to local communities for institutional strengthening and training in radio production. A work-plan for the implementation of the project was prepared with the collaboration of potential users of the rural radio consisting of representatives from the public and private sectors, NGOs, bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

GCP/MLI/020/NET – *Relance de la Radio Rurale- Phase II*

As a follow-up to the first phase of the Rural Radio Project, a second phase was implemented between 1997 and 2000 with the financial support from the Government of the Netherlands for the creation of four community rural radio stations, in Bougouni, Bla, Kolondieba and Koutiala, in the cotton-producing region also known as Mali-South. The project was implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Communication and with the local support of the CMDT (Mali Company for Textile Development).

The management structure that would have assured the continuity of the four rural radio stations was considered of fundamental importance. To achieve this objective, the local population has been involved as much as possible in the management of the radio stations, by means of:

- a sensitization campaign to inform and mobilize local communities;
- the creation of Programme and Management Committees; and
- the establishment of production teams.

The absence of any regulations with regard to radio broadcasting in the Mali Republic has made it necessary to carry out a study dealing with the adoption of a

juridical status for this sector, as well as the specifications recognized by the Government.

2. Learning objectives

The aim of both rural radio projects was to build capacity in the overall management and operation of a rural radio station as well as provide the necessary equipment for the installation of radio stations. This entailed, on the one hand the establishment of a management structure capable of ensuring the financial sustainability of the station and the smooth running of a programming schedule, and on the other the development of skills in radio production techniques and equipment operation and maintenance.

3. Training objectives

The aim of the project was the training of radio producers or, as their title suggests, *animateurs*, that is journalists with specific skills ranging from radio interviewers to social researchers and media organizers.

During this first phase, the project carried out a technical feasibility study for the installation of local rural radio stations in the North and South regions of the country. The first phase of the rural radio project began in May 1993 and was completed in June 1995. Its main objectives were:

- Formulating a short-term and a long-term rural radio development plan;
- Training rural radio personnel at the regional and local levels;
- Defining the juridical, administrative and financial modalities relating to rural radio; and
- Establishing a follow-up and evaluation system that would lead to a study of the rural radio audience.

In the second phase, training consisted of installing four rural radio stations in the southern region of Mali: Bla, Kolondieba, Koutiala and Bougouni. The main aim of these radio stations was to produce radio programmes for rural populations and engage them in dialogue and discussion over topics of their own immediate interests. Similarly, the radios were expected to provide assistance in information and communication for other development programmes supported by the Dutch Development in fields such as natural resource management and protection, education, water conservation and promotion of gender issues.

4. Training methodology

FAO's support to rural radio in Mali mainly concentrated on capacity building of local human resources to acquire the technical aptitudes and competences that were indispensable for production, organization, broadcasting, management as well as the maintenance of the rural radio stations.

The methodological approach, which in earlier models of rural radio had been placed primarily on educational aspects, concentrated on the interactive dimension, and to mutual support. Essentially it was the entire communication process that had been enhanced, as well as the present means of operating. Whereas the old way of doing radio had been based upon a thematic approach, the new rural radio formula builds on the principle of integration, and seeks a global approach. The rural radio methodology took into account the juridical and regulatory aspects that enabled rural radio networks to operate independently after the external assistance ended.

The main objective of a rural radio methodology was to ensure that rural radio activities were embedded in the daily schedule of programming and were geared towards service provision of the different development operations. In order to do these four methodological principles were applied:

1. **Integration:** It was essential that rural radio stations expediently integrated all of the concerns and themes of rural development. It was therefore important to encourage the establishment of intersectoral structures for the joint planning and orientation of programmes that involved the Ministry departments concerned with development, the NGOs, the sponsors, as well as the associations or groups that were representative of the rural world.
2. **Interdisciplinarity:** It was essential that the rural radio production and animation teams were of an interdisciplinary nature. It was useful for the staff and technicians from the main organizations involved in rural development to work together with these teams, to provide them with homogeneous and technical training on rural radio production methods, and to encourage the creation within these organisations of groups that would follow up the activities of the rural radio stations.
3. **Interactivity:** The rural radio production and broadcasting activities were based upon the real concerns that affected rural world, and they took the form of a permanent dialogue with the communities. Therefore priority was given to mobile production means and to information coming from the field. Radio programmes were adapted to the cultural characteristics and the communication circuits that were typical of the rural world. In addition, they integrated the values that formed part of the local heritage.
4. **Durability:** It was essential to design and formulate the appropriate juridical, institutional and administrative framework that allowed the rural radio stations to generate their own resources, and to manage their activities autonomously.

5. Trainers and trainees

FAO experts in collaboration with the Mali Radio and Television (RTM) trained 106 radio producers at national, regional and local level. Two international consultants led training sessions in microprogramme production and audio documentation and archival, while various national consultants led the training in radio production techniques, audio and editing techniques. Among these a number of radio

technicians were also trained in recording and editing techniques. Training sessions were open to officers from agricultural support services so that they could also be exposed to the rural radio methodology. The local communities as owners of these radios networks participated in an active manner in the production of radio programmes, and in their monitoring, in order to promote the development of social, economic and cultural activities.

6. Learning assessment

The assessment of the local communities learning was important to understand how they were managing and applying the new radio methodology. Globally the activities of the project have been successfully implemented. Key to this success was the involvement of local communities from the very beginning of the implementation period starting with the establishment of the Management Committee. The work of the committee was thus instrumental in creating a democratic and transparent environment in which members of the community had developed a deep sense of ownership of the radio, could voice their opinions freely and be sure that their concerns were taken in consideration.

7. Training Infrastructure

The training sessions took place in official buildings in the capital Bamako, with the support of radio networking broadcasting in Mali.

8. Institutional arrangements

FAO as technical Agency implemented the project with the executive support of the Ministry of Culture which was designated as the Government Institution in charge of the project.

9. Impact

Radio stations were regarded as tools for mediating between villagers and their external partners and as an effective way of expressing the needs of rural communities. Often villagers' requests for better services, equipment and assistance were communicated through the radio. They knew that decision makers, back in the capital city, were listening and that radio gave them the opportunity to express their opinions, raise their concerns and be heard.

Radios were also viewed as tools for reinforcing cohesion and solidarity within villages. Through the exchange of information and different points of view, people learnt about each other's ways of "doing things" from agricultural practices to marketing techniques, credit and investments. Radio broadcasts promoted and mobilized the participation of all community members to achieve a common goal.

Thanks to rural radio, people could familiarize themselves with their environment and with socio-economic and social health care problems as they evolved. Rural radio also allowed them to become better informed and to better understand the world around them. In this manner, they could participate more easily in different development programmes and become more involved in those activities which allowed them to become creative.

10. Sustainability

Local communities, the owners of these radio networks, participated in an active manner in the production of radio programmes and in their monitoring in order to promote the development of social, economic and cultural activities.

Village surveys have revealed that consequently rural audiences recognized the important role that radio stations play in awareness-raising, training and education. It was agreed that air time had to be extended in order to cover all the topics they were interested in or that responded to their specific concerns. In most cases, audiences contributed financially to the radio's running costs through subscriptions, therefore the direct ownership or control over programme contents was a legitimate claim on their part and also showed the level of commitment they were willing to engage.

11. Cost

The TCP project contributed US\$260 000 in 1993. Then an additional funding of US\$80 000 was granted by UNICEF for the purchase of material and equipment. The second phase of the project was funded by the Government of the Netherlands with US\$795 000.

Conclusion

We would like to recommend this book to all those people interested in issues related to technical projects.

It could be a useful tool for the delivery of education services and training in Africa and elsewhere in the world.

It focuses on the educational training processes which are able to change and modify the knowledge, the capacity, and the behaviour of target groups and empower them with the purpose of increasing production and incomes unavailable to the poor.

The education and training projects reported in the book describe the strategies of field practices that can be easily replicated in different countries as well as the results of such experiences whose effects on the beneficiaries or target groups have been so evident and important that the idea of going back to the previous behaviour has never been considered again.

Learning from field experiences of other people facing similar problems has proved to be an efficient practice. The exchange of information and communication among governments and communities is important to accept and promote the implementation of new technologies.

In this book, an attempt has been made to share field experiences. The lessons learnt show that governments, planners, communities and field workers should search for a multiplier effect in training.

It is proven that agriculture production, sustainability and productivity increase when small-scale farmers, extensionists, teachers, trainers, learners and local rural populations are involved in projects of rural development promoting changes and improving livelihoods.

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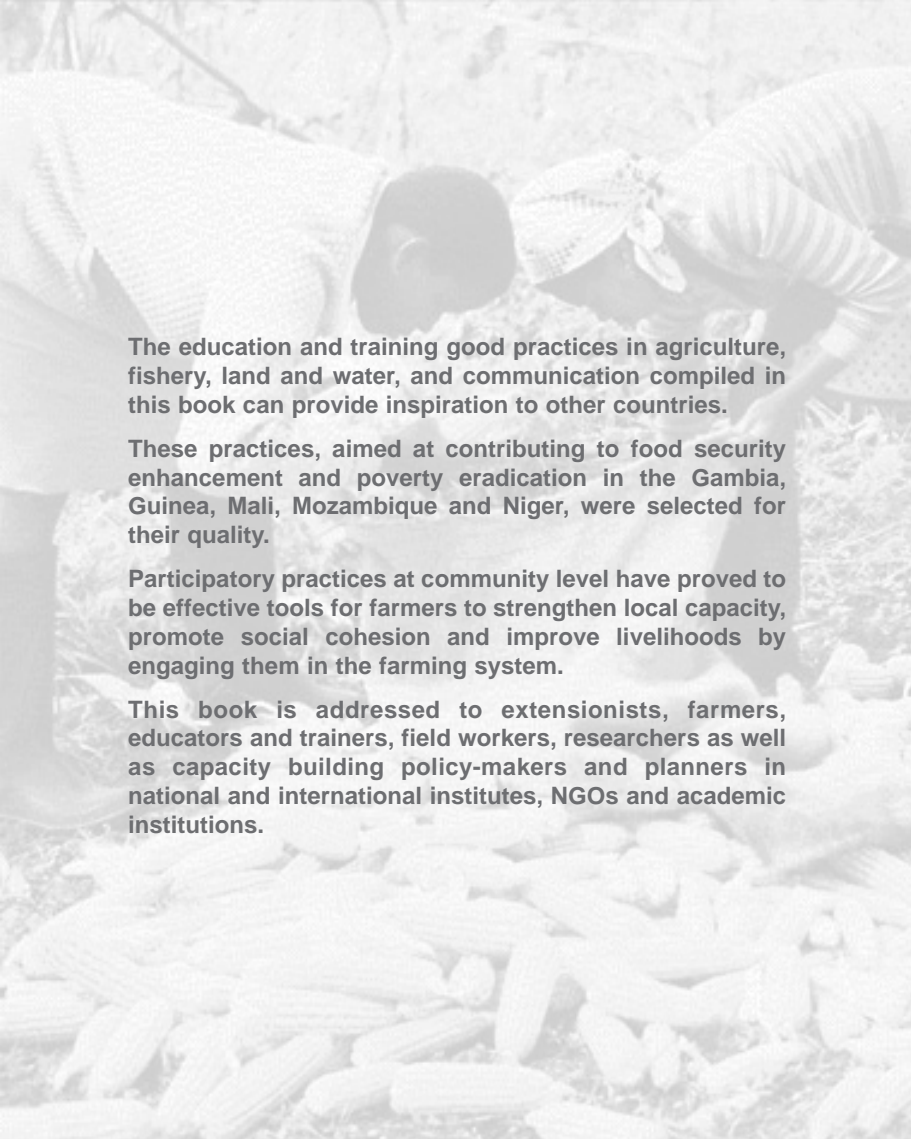
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18. ***Education for Rural People and Food Security: A cross Country Analysis*** by Burchi, F. & De Muro, P. Rome 2007 (also available at http://www.fao.org/sd/erp/ERPpublications_en.htm)



The education and training good practices in agriculture, fishery, land and water, and communication compiled in this book can provide inspiration to other countries.

These practices, aimed at contributing to food security enhancement and poverty eradication in the Gambia, Guinea, Mali, Mozambique and Niger, were selected for their quality.

Participatory practices at community level have proved to be effective tools for farmers to strengthen local capacity, promote social cohesion and improve livelihoods by engaging them in the farming system.

This book is addressed to extensionists, farmers, educators and trainers, field workers, researchers as well as capacity building policy-makers and planners in national and international institutes, NGOs and academic institutions.

Education for Rural People:
a call to boost education and training for food security

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http://www.fao.org/sd/erp/index_en.htm

