



Agricultural Radio That Works.

Participatory Radio Campaigns: Farm Radio International's unique and proven approach to helping small-scale farmers learn about, evaluate and benefit from low-cost, sustainable and more productive farming practices.



www.farmradio.org

Participatory Radio Campaigns

What they are

Participatory Radio Campaigns (PRCs) were developed by Farm Radio International as a way to help farmers learn about, evaluate, and introduce new agricultural practices that they are interested in trying. With training and facilitation support from Farm Radio International, selected radio stations work closely with farmers and farmer organizations, agricultural extension and advisory services, researchers and others to carefully plan and deliver a four-six month radio campaign. During the PRC, farmers are able to explore, exchange knowledge, gain information and share experiences with a new agricultural practice that can improve their family's food security. Lively and entertaining, PRCs feature the voices, stories and perspectives of ordinary farmers through a mix of radio formats, including panel discussions, vox pops, village debates, phone-in shows, mini-dramas and music. Farmers provide feedback and are involved in monitoring and evaluating the PRCs throughout. New Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) such as cell phones, MP3 players, interactive voice response systems, and bulk SMS messaging systems are linked with radio to boost the interactivity, reach and accessibility of PRCs.

Why they are important

Small-scale farmers provide approximately 70% of the food eaten in sub-Saharan Africa. Yet despite being the prime food producers, small-scale farmers are more likely than any other segment of the population to be impoverished and to suffer the effects of hunger and malnutrition. This situation can change by providing small-scale farmers with the supports they need to improve their productivity, enhance their resiliency, and connect more successfully with markets. Through the African Farm Radio Research Initiative (AFRRI), Farm Radio International learned that PRCs can be highly effective strategies for achieving these important goals.

How they are different

Unlike top-down, externally-driven campaigns, PRCs engage farmers as active participants from day one: the focus of the campaigns is farmer-approved; the time of day and day of the week of broadcast is farmer-selected; and farmers are intimately engaged in the knowledge sharing process throughout. The purpose of the PRC is to help farmers evaluate and make an informed decision about a new practice that could help them. They are provided with the best information from reliable sources to help them navigate and implement these practices.

Yet PRCs are not simply regular, ongoing information services: they are designed to have a measurable impact. In fact, experience has shown that PRCs result in many farmers adopting improvements; and, when they succeed, farmers' lives improve.

In the past, organizations that wanted to reach farmers with agricultural information created or hired media houses to produce professional messages, "spots and jingles," and serial or mini-dramas, and then purchased airtime from radio stations to broadcast them. PRCs are different: with training and guidance from Farm Radio International, the radio station itself produces the programs and makes them part of their service to listeners. Radio producers can make exceptionally good programs that attract a large, loyal audience. These programs become part of the station's brand and an important part of their marketing strategies.



Did you know?

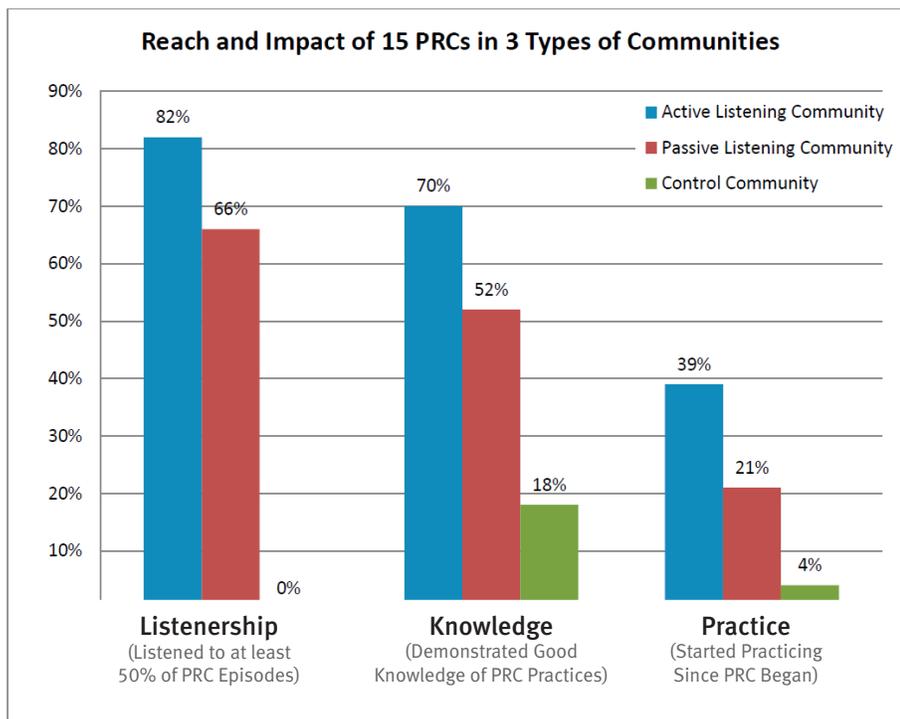
Since 2008, Farm Radio International has supported the production, broadcast and evaluation of 49 Participatory Radio Campaigns serving some 50 million small-scale farmers.

PRCs: A Tested and Proven Methodology

From 2008 to 2010, AFRRRI worked with 25 radio stations in five countries to research, plan and produce two PRCs. In all, 49 PRCs were broadcast about a range of agricultural improvements.

In August 2010, AFRRRI carefully evaluated 15 PRCs (three per country) to find out whether: a) farmers listened to them (and, if so, how frequently); b) they resulted in increased knowledge about the improved practice; and, c) they resulted in adoption of the improved practice by farmers. In total, the survey reached 4500 farmers – 300 per PRC. One third of these interviews were conducted in “active listening communities” (ALCs). In ALCs residents could listen to broadcasts AND they were active participants in planning and giving feedback to the programs, and were frequently interviewed. Another third of interviewees were in “passive listening communities” (PLCs). PLCs were able to listen only if they chanced on the program by themselves, but did not have other contact with the program. The PLCs are typical of the majority of the people reached by the radio station’s broadcasts. A final third were in “control communities” (CCs). CCs could not receive broadcasts and were not aware of the PRCs.

The Findings



What this means

Prior to AFRRRI, the notion that participatory radio programs could regularly reach at least 22% (and up to 99%) of community members, that listening to these programs would result in over 50% of farmers gaining significant new knowledge about an agricultural innovations, and that one in five would actually introduce it – five times the rate of adoption by farmers not exposed to the radio program – might have seemed far-fetched. But that is what a rigorous, randomized and controlled study revealed. The implications are remarkable because of the scale: a typical radio station reaches anywhere from hundreds of thousands to millions of farmers. The cost of a PRC is pennies per farmer reached and less than a dollar per adopter. No other strategy compares.

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The Methodology

A PRC is a planned, radio-based activity, conducted over a specific period of time (usually four-six months), in which a broad population of farmers is encouraged to make an informed decision about the adoption of a specific agricultural improvement that has been selected by their peers, is supported by the best available evidence, and is intended to improve their livelihoods.

The PRC provides farmers with the information and other supports they require to implement the improvement. A PRC:

- Is produced by trained and experienced radio station staff as a special service of the station to the community.
- Assures the participation of farmers and broadcasters in all stages of the campaign.
- Features the voices of farmers.
- Gathers continuous feedback from listeners.
- Engages and entertains listeners using a variety of effective radio formats. Mini-dramas, music, interviews, community debates, panel discussions, phone-in and phone-out shows, and field reports are just some of the formats employed.
- Involves close collaboration among broadcasters, farmers and their organizations, agricultural extension officers, researchers, NGOs working in the area, and others.
- Uses a “core story” to provide a common thread through the campaign, keeping it focused and engaging.

The agricultural calendar is a major driving force in determining the ideal timing of the PRC.

PRCs and Value Chains

PRCs can play a very effective role in supporting a value chain approach to agricultural development. A series of campaigns can focus on different links in the chain, with the first focusing on productivity enhancement, a second helping farmers reduce post-harvest losses, and a third looking at adding value. Accompanying the series of PRCs could be an interactive Market Information Service broadcast that provides farmers with essential price information in different markets, together with advice about consumer preferences and ways to connect with buyers.



Did you know?

Farm Radio International was founded in 1979 by a broadcaster from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC).



Farm Radio at a Glance

- 6 Regional Field Offices
- 400 Partner Radio Stations
- 39 Countries

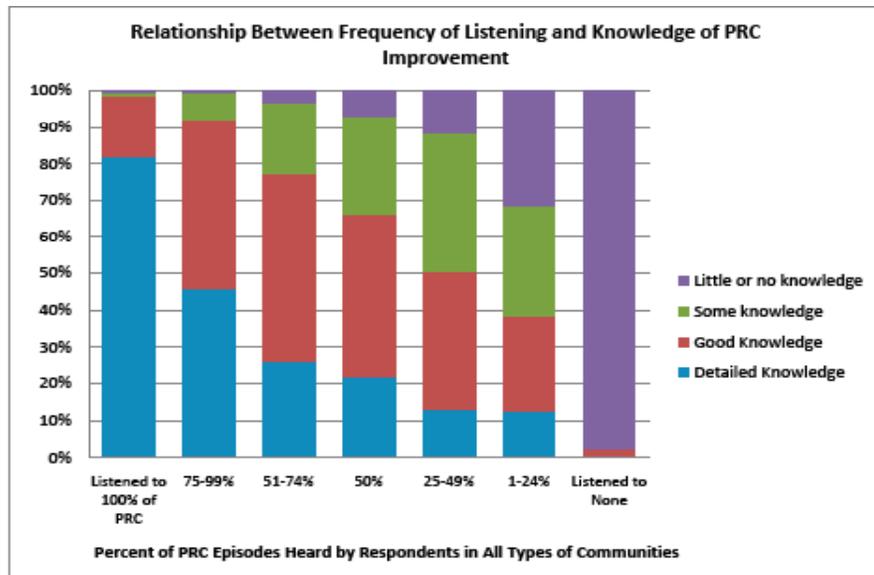
PRCs: An Unrivalled Scale-Up Strategy

Many agricultural innovations have been developed – by researchers and sometimes by small-scale farmers themselves – that, if adopted on a wide scale, would make a significant contribution to increasing food security and reducing poverty. Too often, these innovations are hidden in a small development project or stuck on a researchers’ shelf. The challenge is to find a way to communicate these ideas to hundreds of thousands of farmers in an effective and affordable way. Traditional extension systems cost anywhere from \$4 to \$360 per farmer reached! **Can PRCs offer a cost-effective alternative to this scale-up challenge?**

Yes!

The randomized, controlled study of PRCs completed by Farm Radio International in 2010 revealed that two out of three residents of “passive listening communities” listened to at least half of the episodes in a PRC, and that one in three listened to nearly all of them. To compare, 1/3rd of Americans watched the 2010 Superbowl: on average PRCs attracted double the audience of America’s most popular TV show! Across the 15 radio stations that were studied, at least 22% and up to 97% of community members – male, female, young and old – received about seven hours of extension services through each PRC over the airwaves. And because radio reaches a lot of farmers – anywhere from 10,000 to 10 million smallholders per station – this represents a vast amount of agricultural extension advice. In fact, an estimated 160 million extension hours were provided to farmers through these 15 PRCs at an average cost of \$0.05 per extension hour!

By itself, the number of farmers reached has little meaning unless it results in measurable changes in smallholder farmers’ knowledge and practice. AFRRRI proved that changes take place in both these areas in impressive numbers.



The figure above clearly shows the impact of PRCs on the knowledge level of farmers. The 4500 surveyed farmers completed a quiz designed to test their knowledge of the agricultural improvement featured in the PRC. Over 80% of respondents that listened to 100% of the PRC demonstrated detailed knowledge of the improvement, another 17% had good knowledge, and none had little or no knowledge. At the other end of the spectrum, 98% of respondents who did not listen to any of the PRC had little or no knowledge of the improvement, and only 2% had good knowledge. In short, the more farmers listened, the more they learned.

Traditional extension systems cost anywhere from \$4 to \$360 per farmer reached. PRCs cost pennies per farmer.





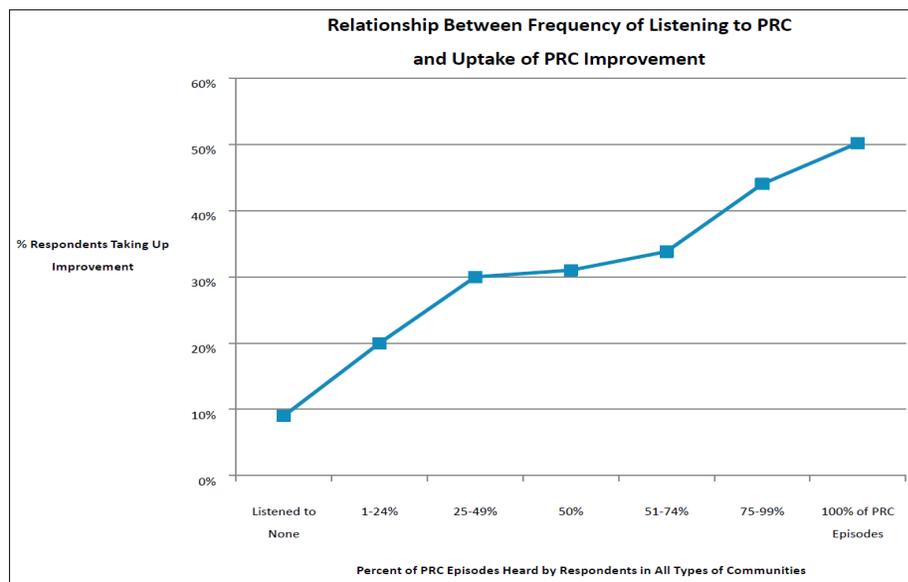
Did you know?

As part of AFRRRI, Farm Radio conducted research on how new technologies such as cell phones & MP3 players increase the effectiveness of radio as a sustainable, interactive development communication tool.

Does Knowledge Lead to Practice?

But did this knowledge lead to uptake of the new practice? Yes it did. In fact, 39% of the members of Active Listening Communities, and 21% of those in Passive Listening Communities started practicing the agricultural improvement after the start of the PRC. By comparison, only 4% of respondents in Control Communities adopted the practice, in spite of the availability of conventional extension services. Thus, farming families in Passive Listening Communities were about five times more likely to adopt a recommended new practice than farmers not exposed to the PRCs. The most effective PRC – Radio Ada’s campaign on the production of compost manure to enhance soil fertility – resulted in 48% of PLC members adopting the new practice! Uptake in Radio Ada’s Control Communities was 0%.

The graph below shows that PRCs affect practice in much the same way they affect knowledge: the more farmers listened, the more likely they were to adopt the new agricultural practice featured in the PRC.



Fifty percent of respondents who had listened to 100% of the PRC episodes started practicing the featured improvement after the campaign began. By comparison, only 9% of those who had not listened to any of the PRC adopted the practice.

In terms of cost effectiveness, the average per-adopter price of this methodology ranges from \$0.30 to \$3.00, with an average cost of about \$1 per adopter.

Are PRCs a Good Strategy for Female Farmers?

Though women, on average, listen to radio less frequently than men and face more constraints in trying to learn about and adopt new agricultural practices, our experience with PRCs shows that they can be a very effective strategy for serving female farmers. Over 60% of female respondents in Passive Listening Communities reported listening to at least half of the PRC episodes, with 41% demonstrating good or detailed knowledge, and 18% introducing the featured improvement on their farms.

Radio Jigiya’s PRC in Mali focused on improved shea butter processing. It shows that, when a campaign focuses on a new practice which primarily benefits female farmers and when it is broadcast at a time of day when women are most likely to listen, it can have a significant impact on their knowledge and practice. Over 40% of women reached by Radio Jigiya’s Shea Butter campaign were encouraged by the PRC to start practicing improved methods of Shea processing.

A Closer Look at Some PRCs



Nkhotakhota Community Radio's campaign on one-by-one planting of maize

Small-scale farmers and the Government of Malawi alike are dedicated to achieving national food security by boosting the production of maize. One-by-one planting is a method that not only boosts per-hectare yield but also cuts down on weeding requirements and reduces soil erosion by creating a tight canopy of maize leaves. Because of these benefits, the government agricultural extension service has been promoting one-by-one planting. Nkhotakhota Community Radio Station designed and launched a five-month PRC in order to help small-scale farmers in the area learn about, evaluate and, if they chose to, introduce one-by-one planting on their farms. The PRC featured eleven different formats, including vox pops, mini dramas, phone-in and phone-out shows, community discussions and field interviews.

The outcome evaluation conducted in August 2010 revealed that over half of passive community members listened regularly to the PRC, 55% of respondents gained good knowledge of the practice, and one of three community members introduced one-by-one planting on at least part of their farms. This was 75% higher than uptake in non-listening communities, where farmers had access to the government's extension support for one-by-one planting, but could not hear the PRC.



Radio Ada's campaign on producing and utilizing manure compost

The first PRC offered by Ghana's Radio Ada Community Radio Station focused on an important community priority: penning small livestock to protect vegetable gardens from roaming goats and pigs. The four-month campaign, which featured community discussions, airing of views by vegetable growers and livestock owners, information on low-cost penning techniques, and other engaging programs, resulted in over 80% of livestock owners constructing enclosures to pen their animals! This level of uptake led to a second campaign – one that took advantage of the new resources made possible by animal enclosures: the production and sale of manure compost.

The second PRC was listened to regularly by over 95% of residents in both Active and Passive Listening Communities. With this high level of listening came high levels of knowledge: 84% of surveyed residents in PLCs scored over 80% on the knowledge quiz and the remaining 16% scored 66%. By comparison, only 18% of respondents in Control Communities demonstrated the same level of knowledge. The PRC also had a significant impact on practice, with 48% of respondents in PLCs reporting that they had started producing manure compost after the campaign began. None of the respondents in the Control Communities had adopted the same practice. Many respondents were bagging and selling the compost in local markets, generating a new source of income from their small livestock.



Mega FM's campaign on bee keeping

For Mega FM in Gulu, Uganda, broadcasting programs about improved bee keeping among the Acholi farmers aimed to help them learn improved methods of producing and processing honey and connecting their products to markets.

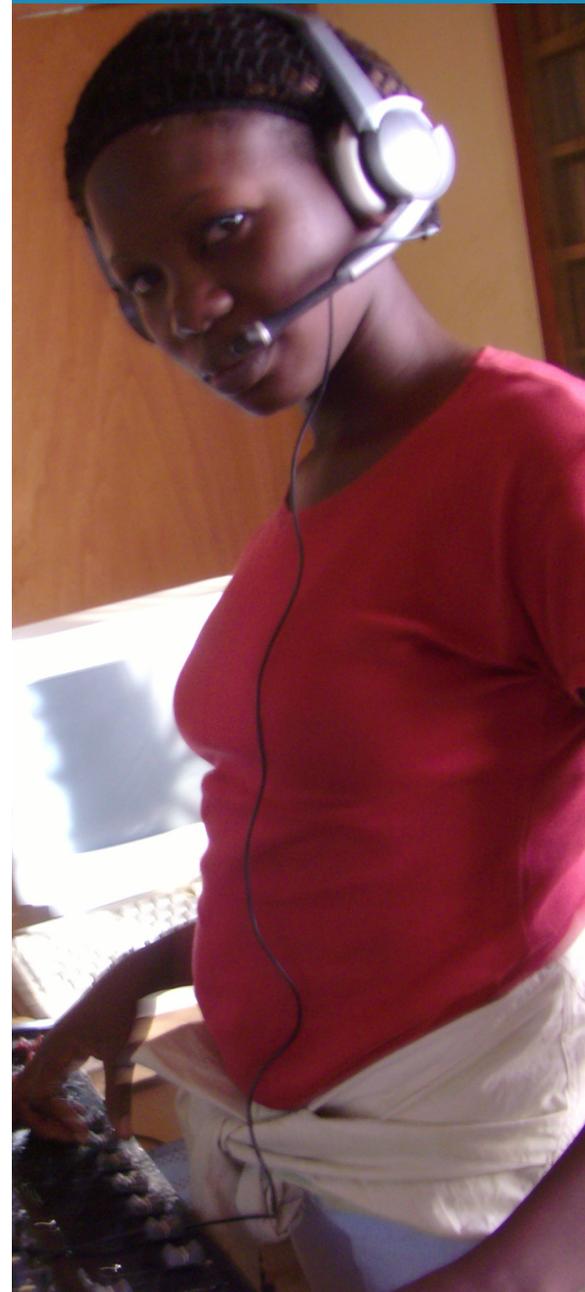
Maxwell Luketta, an Entomologist doubling as the AFRRRI extension volunteer for Mega FM's radio campaign on improved bee keeping, confirmed that the PRC approach had increased the adoption of more productive practices. "The AFRRRI radio campaign has made many people aware of the importance of modern bee keeping because of the continuous broadcasts. Weekly messages have helped people realize the benefits of modern bee keeping." He adds: "... farmers in Mega FM's listening communities have increasingly asked for modern bee hives and bee harvesting gear."

Mega FM's PRC made intensive use of cell phones, bulk SMS and other ICTs to boost listenership and audience interaction. Says Maxwell: "People call Mega radio to offer opinions about the topic of discussion and share their opinions and experiences with other listeners . . . Using radio and telephones together makes information flow very efficient. The station no longer waits 2-3 weeks for letters from listeners."

Completed in 2009, Mega's bee keeping PRC led to 38% of farmers surveyed in Passive Listening Communities reporting that they were practicing improved bee keeping methods in August 2010. By comparison, only 15% of farmers reported the same in non-listening control communities.

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(Mega FM, Gulu, Uganda)



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Working with partners to serve small-scale farmers with communication strategies that work.

How We Work with Partners to Plan, Implement and Evaluate PRCs

Working with partner agricultural development organizations, we take the following approach to developing and implementing PRCs:

1. **Selecting partner radio stations** and building their capacity for PRCs on the selected agricultural “innovation”. We carefully choose stations that are willing and able to participate actively in all aspects of campaign design, implementation and assessment.
2. **Selecting a limited number of communities** to engage more actively as participants in planning and developing the radio campaign. This participatory approach leads to a stronger, more effective, and more popular radio strategy.
3. **Conducting pre-campaign formative research.** We work with radio partners, researchers, extension agents, and local community members to find out what listeners hope to learn, their current knowledge, attitudes and practices with respect to the innovation, and their radio listening preferences.
4. **Designing the campaign.** Working with all partners, a carefully conceived and planned campaign is designed. The campaign is held together by a simple, illustrative core story. It follows a dramatic arc, and is built around a focal decision-point or specific “commitment” by the farmer.
5. **Implementing the campaign.** We support stations in designing, broadcasting, and adjusting a radio strategy consisting of multiple formats, a consistent sound and schedule, regular repeats, and appropriate use of ICTs to interact with listeners, expand audiences, and enable community members to listen repeatedly “on demand”.
6. **Ongoing feedback, interaction, and monitoring.** Using letters, SMS, phone messages and community visits, farmer feedback is constantly solicited and used to adjust and enrich the programs mid-campaign.
7. **Evaluation.** Measurable changes in farmer practices can usually be observed and quantified.
8. **Post campaign information provision.** Farmers require less-intensive but ongoing technical support and assistance as they implement the improved practice.



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