

## **A dose of passion : radio, research and change in Africa**

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The potential impact of using mass media, including and perhaps especially radio, to bring about change is widely recognized (e.g. see Gumucio Dagron 2001). However, this potential is not always fulfilled. We would argue that in order to make the most of mass media's ability to deliver messages, there needs to be close, hands-on collaboration between those with the message, those with the technical skills to deliver it, and potential beneficiaries of the message. This is particularly true where the content and implications of a message are complex and multi-dimensional. We want here to examine one context where this is the case – where research is linked to the message – and to examine ways in which one mass medium, radio, can be effectively brought closer to both researchers and audiences to create more effective communication and hence lead to more effective and appropriate messages relating to behavioural change.

Research, particularly technical research, is rarely 'sexy'. The knowledge it generates and the processes it involves are usually seen as a kind of medicine – necessary but not tasty. However, we would like to argue here that through the use of mass media there is the potential for transforming what often appears to non-specialists (and sometimes even to specialists) as 'dry', tasteless and medicinal into something attractive, even something which evokes passion. We draw on the experience of two research projects, in Uganda and in Zambia, to argue that the use of radio as an inherent part of such projects can breathe life into topics, issues and processes, transforming them from something dry and technical into something full of life and accessible to all. This, we argue, can be achieved through a close and interactive relationship between researchers and radio specialists, with close reference to audiences.

### ***Research and behavioural change***

The term research covers a multitude of things, ranging from very abstract technical research to research into human behaviour. All research has, potentially, an implication for changing human behaviour, although this is not always something which researchers are directly concerned with. However, there are some contexts where the link between research and behavioural change is explicit. This is particularly true in the context of research funded through international development agencies, where the rationale for funding is based on the applicability of the research, and the boundaries between research and its application became blurred. What transpires is what is called 'action research', where a project is seen as both carrying out research and attempting to bring about behavioural change. This type of project often has confused goals (despite the apparent logic of such devices as the UK Department for International Development's 'logframe') and presents a difficult task for those working on it, who are usually researchers with

little understanding of how to bring about change. This particularly applies to natural scientists, who are not trained to analyse human behaviour; but it also applies to social scientists, who are often more concerned to observe *what* people are doing than trying to make them *change* their behaviour; indeed many academic social scientists are resistant to the idea that they are required to bring about change in behaviour. That, as far as they are concerned, should be the job of government agencies, NGOs and community organisations. Nevertheless researchers pay lip-service to acceptance of this role, since it is a pre-requisite for successfully applying for funding. However, privately they are often very frustrated and even angry at the difficult position they are put in, with insufficient experience, networks, political clout or money to bring about change.

There is, then, an inherent tension within many research projects funded through international development agencies. Researchers are tempted to deal with the requirement that they show impact by handing over this responsibility to others – government agencies, NGOs, mass media. In order to make a clear separation between their job and the job of the agencies doing the ‘disseminating’, there is a tendency to want to hand over a clear-cut ‘magic bullet’ message, rather than engaging in a process of developing a message in its most appropriate form – or, indeed, making any alteration to the message. This is not only true of natural scientists but also of social scientists, despite their recognition that the message which they are disseminating needs to be developed through dialogue with the potential beneficiaries. Social scientists working on ‘action research’ projects (and on ‘research’ projects funded by international development agencies which are not formally termed ‘action research’ but which carry the requirement to show impact) tend to limit their involvement to qualitative and quantitative assessments of behaviour and do not happily become involved in transmitting the message which leads to changed behaviour.

The implication of this is that in their dealings with mass media such as radio very few researchers have shown an interest in becoming involved in the nuts and bolts of developing radio programmes, or of the possibilities of bringing radio into the design and process of projects. Mass media are generally seen as something to be used at the end of a project to transmit messages, and the job of developing the messages is handed over to media specialists.

There are problems inherent here. Media specialists lack in-depth knowledge of either the subject matter or the audience. They attempt to respond to what they perceive to be the requirements of the researchers themselves and the sponsoring agencies, and attempt to engage with the audience as far as possible. However, there is a limit in the extent to which it is possible to fulfil any of these different ‘clients’ requirements. Because of the separation between researchers and media specialists, there has been a tendency for messages to be handed over complete in themselves – magic bullets, magic medicine. This means that the message may be over-simplified, inaccurate in research terms and/or inappropriate to the social context. Researchers themselves are often not happy with the way their findings have been handled by the media; and audiences fail to respond or change their behaviour.

Another issue around the dissemination of research findings through the media is that they are often handled in a rather dry, technical way, which is difficult to understand for the non-specialist and which fails to touch the hearts and minds of the audience. In relation to certain key issues, particularly in the field of health (malaria, HIV Aids) there has been funding for much more audience-friendly use of radio, using local voices and incorporating such things as radio listening groups. However, for much research, particularly technical research, the means of transmission remains such models as that used by the Developing Countries Farm Radio Network, which gathers the findings of research and sends out scripts for reading out on local radio. These are a very useful means of disseminating the scientific messages of key projects to a wider world. However, they are usually only fully comprehensible to relatively well-educated extension staff. They are also very dry, not bringing out any human stories behind the research findings, although they could potentially be used in conjunction with such stories on individual radio stations.

### ***Bringing radio into research***

One of us (MJ) is a social anthropologist, while the other (KJ) is a radio producer at the BBC World Service. MJ, as a social anthropologist, is very aware of the importance of getting to know local communities and communicating effectively with them, linking radio with an in-depth understanding of audiences, something which is increasingly being recognized among radio practitioners too (e.g. see Ilboudo 2000). We became aware of the issues described above through MJ's work with natural scientists and other social scientists on projects funded through DFID and the EU. It seemed that within projects involving natural science research in particular there were still considerable difficulties in linking research, the media and audiences. We felt that there was a need for more direct engagement between researchers and the media, and this stimulated us in 2001 to set up a project called 'In the Field'. This involved working with a range of researchers on the production of a radio series for transmission on the BBC World Service, focusing on the findings and outcomes of projects on which they had worked. We trained researchers to go out as 'barefoot reporters' to talk to people in the areas in which their projects had worked, bringing back audio material which we then worked up into programmes, linked through a script. The series focused on engaging the stories, experiences and emotions of individuals – researchers, local staff of agencies, and villagers themselves. We worked closely with the researchers in selecting excerpts from interviews and writing scripts, to ensure that the series was not only appealing and accessible but also accurate from a research point of view and from the point of view of projecting the project context and 'story'. The series was produced with an accompanying booklet and website. The series and its accompanying materials proved to be very popular among listeners round the world, judged through letters and emails received, and requests for the booklet. Most of the responses and requests we received were not from other researchers but from students, teachers and members of the general public, and the series was broadcast a number of times after its first broadcast in 2001. The website continues to be live (see <http://www.nri.org/projects/InTheField/>).

'In the Field' covers a range of topics, many of which, although seen as important by funders, researchers and policy-makers, are not usually seen as either appealing or accessible among the general public – topics such as integrated pest management (i.e. using methods other than pesticides to manage pests) and the potential for new feed for goats. However, through the human stories which were included, and the 'colour' introduced through music, sound effects and, in the website and booklet, hand-painted visuals, these topics came across as lively and appealing. 'In the Field' demonstrated that it was possible to 'bring to life' topics and issues which were apparently very 'dry', and to create programmes to a standard of accessibility acceptable to the BBC, while at the same time satisfying researchers themselves. This was possible through their involvement in the process of production. They were motivated to participate in the project through their desire to communicate their passion for their subjects and their projects, a passion which shone through in the series and other materials but which needed to be carefully mediated in order to couch it in language and terms which had a meaning beyond the research (Janowski and Janowski 2002a; Janowski and Janowski 2002b). This was achieved through setting up a close and 'dialectic' partnership between researchers and media specialists in developing the series. Many researchers had had frustrating experiences previously in working with media specialists, since they felt that their projects had been misunderstood and mis-communicated. This meant that while they were keen to participate they were sometimes wary and unsure of the process of translating their research into 'popular' language. They had difficulties of their own in communicating the messages of their projects clearly in a way which would be understood by a wider audience than other researchers. A significant amount of time was devoted to dialogue in order to overcome all of these difficulties.

Following 'In the Field', we worked on other radio series for the BBC World Service on international development topics, most linked to research projects ('The Language of Development' 2002, 'Making Ends Meet' 2002, 'Gathering in the Rain' 2003, 'Traditional Livelihoods' 2004, 'Rats!' 2005 – see [http://www.livelihoods.org/info/audio/audio\\_NRI\\_index.html](http://www.livelihoods.org/info/audio/audio_NRI_index.html) for details and audio of most of these). We felt that we would like to try to integrate radio series into research projects on which MJ was working together with other researchers, to see if we could take the role of radio further. This was not only in the context of the remit of government radio stations to 'inform and educate', but also in the context of the mushrooming of local FM and community radio stations, especially in Africa, which have the potential to relate closely to local populations (e.g. see Moemeka 1981; Gumucio Dagron 2001). This led to the making of 'Together to Market' in Uganda and 'Eating out Safely' in Zambia, both as part of projects funded through DFID's Crop Post-Harvest Research Programme (CPHP), which was managed through NR International, a company jointly owned by a consortium of universities. 'Together to Market' was made in conjunction with a local FM station and was eventually broadcast on a number of others; 'Eating out Safely' was broadcast on Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation's Radio 2.

Projects commissioned by CPHP included some led by natural scientists and others led by social scientists. 'Together to Market' was made within a project falling into the latter category, which was initially entitled 'Decentralised Market Information Service in Lira

District, Uganda' but later renamed (due to the prominent role which radio came to play in the project after MJ joined the project team) 'Market Information Tools: Combining Radio and Training to Facilitate Successful Farmer Group Marketing' ('Uganda Group Marketing' here). 'Eating out Safely' was made within the Zambian part of a project led by natural scientists with the mouthful of a name 'Maximising impact of food safety knowledge of street vended and informally vended foods generated by CPHP projects in West and Southern Africa using the coalition approach and extending the approach to India' ('Zambia Food Safety' here).

The names of the projects do not, interestingly, imply that they were research projects, but rather that they were straightforward 'development' projects. Indeed, there is a sense in which the two projects were conducted as though this were the case. There was a certain level of confusion, in practice, over what was meant by 'research' within the projects and how much space was to be devoted to research. This undoubtedly to a large extent reflects the confused mandate which the CPHP programme leaders themselves were given by DFID, which required both the achievement of behavioural change and that (somewhat secondarily) what was commissioned needed to be classed as 'research'. All of the members of the project team for the Zambia Food Safety project (except MJ) were food safety specialists, and the categorisation of the project as a research project appeared to be based on the involvement of scientific researchers *per se*, even though no scientific research as such was done as part of the project. It is not clear whether in some sense either the CPHP programme leaders or the project leader saw the project's activities promoting safer preparation of food among food vendors as involving (social scientific) research into the uptake of scientific knowledge about food safety. However, this was not explicitly recognized. The survey at the end of the project assessed changes in perception and behaviour among food vendors but did not look beyond this to examine the processes of change involved. This would be the type of survey carried out within a 'development' project without any research element. Within the Uganda Group Marketing project (in which MJ was involved from the start) there was a more explicit acceptance that the work of the project included research into the social and economic impact of what the project was doing (a somewhat circular situation which is inherent to action research). However, there was inadequate time and money allocated to the project to allow this to be pursued very thoroughly, and therefore the status of the research element was unclear.

Both in Zambia and in Uganda we believed that radio would help to achieve the development goals of the projects concerned – safer ways of preparing and handling food in the case of the Zambia Foods project and the formation of marketing groups in the case of the Uganda Marketing project – by creating warmer, more human communication through the telling of real-life stories through the radio. We also believed that it should be possible to incorporate radio into the fabric of the project, to enhance the research element itself by bringing about better communication between different stakeholders and between the stakeholders of the project and those who were meant to benefit from it – who were the audience of the radio series – thus allowing the form and content of the message itself to be investigated and potentially reshaped.

There are some significant differences as well as parallels between the two projects, and we hope to draw out some implications and lessons based on this. We were dealing in the two cases with very different audiences, very different levels of understanding among the audiences of the development goal, and very different broadcasting contexts. The Uganda Marketing project involved broadcast over a number of rural and small-town stations, to a defined (if pretty all-inclusive, in the areas concerned) audience of farmers who were already aware that they had a problem which they wanted to solve in relation to selling to more distant markets where prices were higher. The Zambia Food Safety project involved broadcast over the national broadcasting station, to the general public, most of whom did not realize that there were safety issues associated with food stall cleanliness although they were concerned about this from other points of view.

### ***‘Together to Market’***

The Uganda Group Marketing project as part of which the radio series ‘Together to Market’ was made was a two year project (1 January 2003 – 31 December 2004) which involved a package of linked activities intended to encourage farmers to form marketing groups and market together. The premise of the project was that farmers in Uganda would be more able to access more distant markets if they grouped together to form cooperative groups. This premise was based on experience elsewhere in the world, but in particular the successful formation and operation of cooperative groups in Uganda, especially the experiences of an NGO called CEDO (Community Enterprises Development Organisation) in Rakai District, which was one of the partners in the project; Fred Bikande, a CEDO trainer and luminary, provided training in Lira District as part of the project. Another partner in the project was the CGIAR research centre FOODNET, based in Kampala, and the project was linked to the FOODNET initiative to disseminate market information via radio, mobile phones and posters. A premise of this FOODNET initiative was that accessing more distant markets would be easier if farmers had access to market prices, so it fed well into the Uganda Group Marketing project and would, it was hoped, be made more feasible through our project.

Initially, before MJ became involved in the project, it was intended that the project would involve only the writing of an advice manual, together with training for farmers drawing on the manual. There was a radio element from the beginning in the link with the Foodnet dissemination of market prices through radio, mobile phones and posters, but with the decision to make the series ‘Together to Market’ the nature of the project was radically altered.

Our intention in making ‘Together to Market’ was to put across ‘in their own words’ the stories of other farmers, in other parts of Uganda, who had experienced the difficulties, excitements and rewards of setting up and running cooperative marketing groups. We believed that this would generate a significant level of empathy and emotional understanding of what was involved in setting up groups. Given that the project was a research project, we also aimed to ask what role the use of radio played in the process. Although researching the role of radio in changing behaviour – and the role of radio in research - were not formal aims of the project (as noted above, the role of research in the

project was not entirely clear) enough formal and informal assessments of the way in which radio was used were incorporated to be able to draw some conclusions about this. We will return to this shortly.

The advice manual was written by a group of marketing specialists led by Ulrich Kleih of the Natural Resources Institute, University of Greenwich, an independent marketing consultant, Peter Robbins, and Geoffrey Okoboi of Foodnet. It drew on experience in other countries in the formation of marketing cooperatives, and on the experience of Frederick Bikande, one of the co-authors, in his work over a number of years supporting group formation for CEDO in Rakai District.

‘Together to Market’ was made by a team consisting of MJ and KJ, Mr. Benson Taiwo of Foodnet/Radio Lira and Mr Kai Depkat of RadioWorks / Radio Lira, working closely with other members of the project team. Radio Lira was one of the partners on the project, and the series was broadcast initially on this small privately owned station in Lira town.

The programmes are focused on personal and group stories about setting up and marketing through farmers’ groups, gathered in Masindi and Rakai Districts in Uganda. They cover topics chosen jointly by the radio team and the team of marketing specialists as lending themselves to ‘human stories’ with successful outcomes, being of particular interest to the audience of the local radio stations on which broadcast would take place, and key to the formation of cooperative groups. These topics were also the focus of the face-to-face training in group formation and marketing carried out as part of the project.

The programmes in the series were:

1. Why form groups?
2. Why market together?
3. Getting started
4. Trust and transparency
5. Getting information about the market
6. Women and men in groups
7. Keeping going – the Kamukamu womens’ group
8. Money matters – the Bateganda womens’ group
9. Getting the size right – the Andingana farmers’ group
10. A vision for the future – the Kasambiya farmers’ group

Programmes in the series included excerpts of interviews carried out in the field linked together through a script read in the studio. The original version of the series was made in English, with voice-overs of the original language excerpts. Benson Taiwo received training ‘on the job’ in interviewing, the use of recording equipment, and digital editing from KJ.

Benson Taiwo went on to make a Luo version of Together to Market in November/December 2003 for broadcast on Radio Lira. Other local radio presenters also

became involved through a preparatory training session which was held in Kampala, at Foodnet, for 13 local radio presenters and producers. Through the advocacy of some of those who participated the series was translated into other languages in 2004 and 2005 and broadcast on other local stations in Uganda: Ateso by Emily Arayo of Foodnet (broadcast on Voice of Ateso in Soroti District); Lunyoro by Fred Kasozi of Foodnet/Radio Kitara (broadcast on Radio Kitara in Masindi); and Luganda and Lusoga, by Emily Arayo with the collaboration of David Kaye of Foodnet (broadcast in Jinja, Kampala and Rakai District on a variety of different FM stations). PANOS East Africa, which is based in Kampala, agreed to provide support for this work to be carried through.

The multiple roles of some of the key radio presenters and producers involved in the making and transmission of the series was important in stimulating a dialogue between specialists and the audience. Benson Taiwo was secretary of the local farmers' organisation; he gathered prices and market information in local markets for Foodnet; he was a well-known figure on the radio through his role as presenter of the Market News programme (on which market prices were broadcast, sponsored by Foodnet) and of the series Farmers' Corner, both on Radio Lira; and he was involved in training of farmers in the formation of cooperatives through the project, as part of a team including Fred Bikande, Geoffrey Okoboi of Foodnet and Cecilia Agang, an independent consultant from Lira. 'Together to Market' was broadcast in English and Luo in conjunction with or as part of both of these two series a number of times in 2004. Because Benson was in contact with farmers in a number of ways and contexts, he was able to use these multiple channels to feed back into each other, making it possible to go some way to readjusting the content of the training sessions and building in discussion linked to transmission of 'Together to Market' within the series Farmers' Corner. Another local radio presenter who had a multiple role was Frederick Kasozi, who was a presenter on Radio Kitara and was closely involved with the local farmers' organisation in Masindi as well as working for Foodnet as a data collector. Frederick Kasozi and Benson Taiwo were important in providing a means of setting up a dialogue on the radio involving farmers in the area.

'Together to Market' packages are between 6 and 10 minutes long. They are designed so that they can be played out alone, but ideally as part of a longer programme which can incorporate discussion of the topics covered, including with guests and the reading out of letters, postcards and text messages from listeners. On Radio Lira, when the series was played out as part of 'Farmers' Corner', Benson Taiwo did incorporate discussion and explanation of the topics, and in later broadcasts he was able to incorporate reading out postcards from listeners. Frederick Kasozi also incorporated discussion of the issues into the broadcast of the series on Radio Kitara.

A baseline survey of sources of information on the part of farmers and traders was carried out in early 2003, early in the project. This used both questionnaires and qualitative PRA discussions. Radio was found to be the most important mass medium used for information on most subjects by most people, underlining the appropriateness of using radio as part of the project. In early 2004, a monitoring survey using a questionnaire format was carried out in Lira District, during the transmission of 'Together to Market' and the period during which face-to-face training was being carried out, and after



transmission and training was completed, between September and November 2004, an evaluation survey using qualitative PRA discussions was carried out, not only in Lira District but also in Soroti and Apac Districts, following the involvement of Appropriate Technology Uganda in the project and the translation of 'Together to Market' into Ateso for broadcast through the radio station Voice of Teso.

Generally, these surveys and PRA discussions found that farmers were very positive about the series. They welcomed hearing from farmers in other areas through their own voices and stories, saying that this indeed, as we had hoped, bring to life what it meant to form a group and run it. They asked for more series of this kind, and suggested topics. Interestingly, they said that they would like a balance between 'stories' from nearby and from faraway – including from as far away as Europe, where people had parallel issues to face.

The importance of combining different media to obtain maximum communicative effectiveness came out as important, particularly in the PRA discussions. Farmers said that they found the combination of radio and training ideal, and that radio on its own was not enough. Because there was a lot of detailed experience and advice to transmit in relation to the practicalities of group formation, they felt that they benefited greatly from face-to-face training; they found many of the issues complex and needed a forum in which they could talk them through thoroughly with someone who had experience in group formation. However, they also said that training on its own would not have brought the issues to life as radio had done. A number of respondents suggested that printed material and perhaps also video shows might also be combined with the training and the radio series. Basically, the message was that a combination of media (if we include training as a medium of communication) was best.

The surveys found that men listened to the series more than women, and this fitted in with the findings of the baseline survey – that more men than women have access to radio sets. A number of respondents in the monitoring survey suggested that radios be given to farmers' groups so that they would be able to listen together. Since many of the groups are formed by women, this would also increase access by women to radios. Although there are no nationwide or even regional figures which would enable this to be confirmed, it would appear that women make up the majority of farmers' group members in Uganda, due to the ravages of AIDS, which have hit men harder than women, and, in Lira, of the Lords Resistance Army conflict, which has led to the loss of many men. We were struck in our visit to Rakai District to gather material from successful farmers groups for the series to find how many farmers' groups were formed by widows who were supporting their own and other people's children, left orphans. A number of women in the surveys asked for programmes related to health and the care of children, and this was explicitly linked to the fact that they were left caring for so many children on their own.

### *'Eating out Safely'*

The series 'Eating out Safely' was made in October 2005 towards the end of a one-year project (January 2005-January 2006) which itself followed on from various CPHP funded projects aimed at promoting the safety of informally vended food in Ghana and Zambia through the training of food vendors in markets in Lusaka. Radio was brought in as a means of further disseminating awareness of the importance of safer methods of preparing food, primarily among consumers but also among vendors who had not yet received training.

As with the making of 'Together to Market', although there was no explicit research aim associated with the involvement of radio, we were able to draw some conclusions about the potential role of radio in this kind of context from a short qualitative assessment of response among consumers and vendors during the transmission of the series, as well as through the telephone calls made to the studio as part of the broadcast.

In making 'Eating out Safely' we worked with the Zambian National Broadcasting Corporation, and they were generous with their physical and staff resources. They assigned one of their producer/presenters, Rosina Mbewe, to work with KJ and MJ in the making of the series, and she was taken off other duties. Rosina, like Benson, received training 'on the job' in the use of recording and editing equipment and software from KJ, while working on the making of the series.

In planning the form and content of the series, KJ, MJ and Rosina Mbewe worked closely with researchers working on the project, particularly Dr. Rodah Zulu at the National Institute for Scientific and Industrial Research in Lusaka. They wanted to cover a range of behavioural changes which are associated with learning about the nature of disease transmission through food. The challenge was to turn a rather dry set of topics into something which would have appeal – to humanize it, in effect. The topics selected were:

1. Response to inspectors
2. Uniforms for staff
3. Management of illness among staff
4. Personal cleanliness of staff
5. Handling of money
6. Display of food
7. Managing space
8. Disposal of waste
9. Water for customers
10. Washing utensils and plates
11. From the laboratory
12. Safe surfaces for preparation, cooking and serving

While 'Together to Market' was made in a scripted format, using excerpts from interviews recorded in the field, we decided to use a less controlled format for the series 'Eating out Safely'. We felt that the series needed to be even more accessible and lively in order to bring in an audience. We decided that since the audience for the series would

need to be enticed in, we would recruit a celebrity to be the ‘star’ of the series, and we chose a well-known local singer, Angela Nyirenda.

We decided that her journey towards a clearer understanding of the food safety issues would be one which the audience would share. We took her to a lab to find out about the science of food safety and to visit a number of food stalls whose owners had received training through the suite of projects on food safety funded through CPHP. Her journey involved not only finding out about food safety but about the owners of the stalls and their personal stories. This meant that the listener was following both Angela’s journey through the lab and the markets and also the stories of those she was getting to know.

We chose a magazine format, with four elements: a short 6-10 minute package, each week following a stage in Angela’s ‘learning journey’; a pre-recorded drama; a studio discussion with guests and listeners who phoned in; and a quiz, with prizes for listeners. Each week, Angela’s journey covered one food stall and one topic; the drama, which was focused on the happenings around a fictitious food stall, covered the same topic; and the studio discussion and quiz also covered that topic. The series of magazine programmes was transmitted on Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation’s Radio 2 over 12 weeks from October to December 2005.

Whilst we were not able to build in a full assessment of responses to the radio series among the general public (consumers) or vendors as part of the project since this was not an explicit research aim of the project, we have data on this from four sources:

- A ‘Knowledge, Attitudes and Practice’ (KAP) questionnaire survey which was carried out by local project partners and external consultants at the end of the project, covering 224 vendors and 127 consumers, which included questions on the series
- A qualitative survey on response to the series among 25 consumers and vendors carried out by MJ and Rosina Mbewe during the period of transmission of the series
- Feedback through the calls received during the course of the programmes
- Feedback on the series from Rosina Mbewe’s colleagues at ZNBC

The KAP found that among the consumers interviewed the series was well known and a large proportion had listened to it. Although Radio 2 was only listened to regularly by 10.9 % of consumers interviewed through the KAP survey, 25% of those interviewed said that they were aware of the series and 68% of these knew the correct day and time of broadcast, indicating that they were truly aware of the series (and not just trying to please the interviewer). A large proportion of informal food vendors interviewed were also aware of the series. One-third of vendors interviewed through the KAP survey knew about it and one-quarter of vendors had listened to it. Assuming that vendors listened to Radio 2 about as often as consumers in general, this indicates a high level of awareness.

It was apparent from all sources that the series had generated a lot of debate about the topics raised. There was a lot of debate on-air as part of the programme, since callers the

opportunity of challenging official guests who had responsibilities for markets; things sometimes got quite hot in the studio! It would appear very likely from the information we have that the series started a longer-running debate on the subject of market cleanliness as well as food safety, and that it stimulated demand for higher levels of cleanliness among consumers and for training in safer food preparation practices from vendors. Indeed the researchers at NISIR expressed some concern about requests for training for vendors in other cities in Zambia which they were not sure they would be able to fulfil.

The level of public interest elicited through the series 'Eating out Safely' is quite an achievement; although there is no doubt that the subject of safe food and cleanliness is one which is capable of engendering debate, there was a high level of technical detail involved in what was covered which would normally be difficult to get people to pay attention to. It would seem that this success was due to two things: the varied and entertaining nature of the way the information was put across, using a magazine format which drew on debate, drama, a quiz and Angela's 'learning journey' packages; and the human face which was put on the issues through those packages. From the qualitative survey and feedback from listeners on-air, and also in the view of other producers and presenters at ZNBC, listeners particularly liked the content and structure of the 'packages', which allowed them to visit the markets and learn about food safety issues through the eyes of a well-known and well-loved celebrity.

When we first took Angela to a market stall and said that she would be eating a meal there she was quite reluctant to do so, as she felt, as do most better-off Zambians, that market food stalls are not a nice place to eat. This was based on a general perception that such places make you sick. By the time we had finished making the series Angela was very positive about eating in market stalls – at least in ones which had received training and were implementing the food safety rules of which she now had an understanding. She had truly made the journey which the listeners followed. What they had followed with Angela was a real journey and they had been able to share it. They had also been able to share her experience of learning about the lives and stories of the stallholders whom she visited and whose food she tasted, and to partake of her delight in the tastiness of the food which she was served in the stalls.

### *The process of making the two series*

The process of making the series Together to Market and Eating out Safely was an experimental one; we developed the models in discussion with the local broadcasters and researchers with whom we were working. Benson Taiwo and Rosina Mbewe had an important role in deciding how issues should be tackled and questions asked and in putting together the programmes in the series.

In making Together to Market, which we made in 2004, we wanted to move away from the usual FM radio approach, which is based on a mixture of music, talk and news. We decided to make mini-features consisting of edited inserts from interviews gathered in the field linked together by a script, which was the model which we had used in previous

series made for the BBC World Service. Because of the clear structure involved in a feature, it would be possible to focus on specific topics and use inserts which exemplified points made through the script. This meant that the features could function both as mini-lessons and exemplifications of these through real-life people's experiences.

The fact that Benson Taiwo, who worked with us on making the programmes, already hosted live hour-long programmes aimed at farmers suggested the possibility of broadcasting the features as part of these. Thus we ended up with a mix of the usual FM model of live radio and a more structured and field-based element. We found that this worked well because Benson had a close relationship with the audience and was able to complement the features with further discussion and response to listeners who spoke to him directly or sent in postcards.

With *Eating out Safely*, we decided on an approach which was controlled but much less structured, and what we made might be described as live reports. It was in effect a radio version of what is sometimes done on television – following a celebrity's visit to explore something new to them. The research team with which we were working at NISIR and Rosina Mbewe strongly supported this approach and they selected the celebrity with whom we worked. The researchers very much wanted to promote the consumption of local food through the series, through encouraging listeners to realize that market food could be safe as well as delicious, and felt that informality and a 'fun' approach was important in achieving this, as food consumption is enjoyable. Angela Nyirenda had instructions as to what she should cover in her visit to each food stall, since each report was focused on a certain topic, she had instructions to be friendly and find out about the experiences of stall holders in setting up and running the stall, and she had instructions to eat the food – but beyond that she had latitude to do this in the way she felt was most appropriate. She was given guidance during the visit as necessary by Rosina Mbewe, MJ and KJ, who shared the visit – and the food! A good deal of the visit was recorded and the making of the as-live reports involved editing and re-ordering clips from what was recorded.

An awareness of the power of material from outside the studio for use in any context other than news is not well developed at radio stations in many parts of the world, including Africa. This is largely because the technical expertise and the equipment to allow material to be brought in and edited are absent; many producer/presenters have never been exposed to the possibility of doing this. Both small private stations like Radio Lira, with whom we worked on *Together to Market*, and state broadcasters like ZNBC, with whom we worked on *Eating out Safely*, have problems with equipment and expertise to allow outside recordings to be made and used in making up packages. We found that the producers/presenters with whom we were working at both stations had never had experience of using field recordings to make up packages. Training is increasingly being provided for local producers and presenters in the making of features but there are problems with sustainability, since ongoing support is important and is often not provided.

What Together to Market and Eating out Safely did in linking training in the gathering of live material and its incorporation into features and other forms of pre-recorded programmes, such as the as-live report format we used for Eating out Safely, with research involving the use and gathering of detailed knowledge about a specific area. For both series, we not only worked closely in conjunction with researchers to identify the topics to be covered, but we relied on the research infrastructure – both human and concrete – to gather audio material.

We therefore faced not only the specific challenge of ‘sexing up’ dry technical material but also the more general challenge of working in partnership with local radio stations which had no experience in the techniques which can achieve this. We did not want to simply make a series and hand it over for broadcast, since not only did this not seem very ‘participatory’ but it would not have been very effective. We needed the participation of the radio station and the local producer/presenters working with us in order to communicate with the audience fully. Radio stations are, in a sense, living entities: they have relationships with their audiences. Producer/presenters have even more lively and dynamic relationships with the listeners who listen in to them regularly. Both of the key producer/presenters with whom we worked – Benson Taiwo in Uganda and Rosina Mbewe in Zambia – are very charismatic and effective presenters. We wanted to engage them as personalities who had significance in their own right in the process of bringing the material to life and communicating the excitement of new knowledge and behaviour to the listeners.

We therefore decided that we would need to incorporate a process of ‘learning on-the-job’ into the making of the two series. In Uganda, KJ offered to provide an initial training session for Benson, before we began working with Benson on the making of the series. In the event 13 people turned up for the initial training. Of these, several went on to make local language versions of Together to Market, but only Benson worked closely with KJ and MJ on the gathering of material, scripting and editing. In Zambia, initial informal training was provided for Rosina Mbewe before going on to work with her on planning the series together with NISIR scientists, selection and briefing of a celebrity, visits to markets and labs, and editing. No script was used in the series Together to Market; impromptu conversations between the singer Angela Nyirenda and food stall holders and others were recorded, edited and strung together with some commentary from Angela.

### ***Tailoring the process***

The role of Benson Taiwo and Rosina Mbewe illustrate the importance of tailoring the use of a mass medium like radio to the specific situation. They played a key role in the process of translating research into accessible messages which cannot be ‘legislated’ for beforehand. Their role went well beyond the simple making of the series. They hosted and presented the series of longer radio programmes within which the pre-recorded packages Together to Market and Eating out Safely were broadcast. In Uganda, these were pre-existing radio series for farmers; in Zambia they were specially scheduled in and were given the same title as the packages – Eating out Safely. Thus the role of these

two individuals was key to the process of communicating the research messages – and also, arguably, contributing to the research process itself.

While one can have the aim of identifying key charismatic individuals with whom to work in making a radio series, one cannot know in advance what kind of people they will be or how exactly it will be appropriate to work with them. Such individuals already have their own reputation and standing, and this is both the foundation and a limitation on the way in which outside specialists can work with them. It is obviously vital to have respect for their ability to communicate with their listeners and to build on this, rather than having too strong a preconceived notion of how a message should be communicated.

On a more practical level, we found that there were important differences between working with a small private station in Uganda and with a state broadcaster in Zambia. Small stations tend to operate on a more hand to mouth basis. A small station like Radio Lira is heavily constrained by financial concerns and influenced by the need for immediate returns. They tend to rely heavily on small-scale advertising and personal notices to finance them. Small stations sometimes succeed in getting significant support from outside agencies but most operate on a shoe-string. Such stations typically have minimal resources, both in terms of concrete things like studio space (Radio Lira's studio is a very makeshift affair with carpet on the walls – see photo) and in terms of human resources (we had great difficulty getting access to their technician; and Benson Taiwo had conflicting demands on him while he was working with us). Small stations in Africa almost always charge for airtime, and Radio Lira became a partner in the project on the basis of financial support from the project. A station like ZNBC, on the other hand, is able to look further into the future since its finances are more secure. ZNBC benefited not only from government support but from larger scale and more predictable donor support and training; ZNBC's collaboration with the project was based on the perceived training benefits of a collaborating BBC producer, and they did not ask for any payment for airtime.

However, there are also some parallels between the two situations. In both cases there is a focus on office and studio based investment, rather than on investment which enables outreach and outside recording. Radio Lira and ZNBC both had only a couple of sets of microphones and DAT recorders and these were allocated to the news teams and were not available to other producer/presenters to go out and gather material. This reflects a limited awareness on the part of the management of the station of the need for material from the field. It is difficult to know why this is, but this is an important issue which needs to be addressed through both training for staff in the use of material from outside the studio and the provision of more equipment. Recording equipment was left with both Benson Taiwo and Rosina Mbewe to enable them to continue to go out to gather material in the field. It is to be hoped that both of them will continue to be involved in using the new techniques they have learned through work on the two series, as well as the awareness of the potential of linking up with researchers who have knowledge which their audience can benefit from.

### *Radio and research: lessons for the future*

An important generalisation about the use of radio is that one should not generalise about how it should be used – ‘there is no established model for participatory communication’ (Gumucio Dagron 2001:33). However, our experience of working in Uganda and Zambia has led us to draw out some general lessons that we would like to pass on to others who seek to make use of radio in the research for development context.

There is growing emphasis on the importance of linking sociological and social development-related research to the use of media like radio, to ensure that radio programme-makers understand the nature of local perceptions and social processes such as processes of change (e.g. see Ishmael-Perkins 2006). However, there is less emphasis on the ways in which more technical research – both natural scientific and behavioural, but particularly the former – can be linked to radio. We would suggest that more attention be paid to the ways in which this can be achieved to achieve educational goals and behavioural ways in a way which interfaces effectively with local cultures and perceptions, and would make some key points.

The first point is that research and radio, far from being incompatible, can form a powerful symbiotic relationship with one another to both inform technical research programmes and to communicate the findings of research to those who are affected by these or need to implement them. Indeed, this symbiosis is essential to ensure that messages are effectively communicated, where there are educational and behavioural change objectives to the research. In order for the symbiosis to be realized, radio needs, in most cases, to be integral to research projects rather than being an ‘add-on’ at the final stages of research and simply a tool to disseminate a ready-made ‘package’ of findings. To this end, our advice would be to factor how radio might enhance research from the very early planning stages of projects.

A second point relates to the radio format used. This is relevant both to the effectiveness of communication and to practicality and portability. A series of short lively packages drawing on real voices from real people in the field telling their own stories can be used to draw the attention of the audience to a series of central points which can be drawn out through broadcast in the context of a magazine programme integrating other formats such as drama, phone in and studio discussion. This is effective in transmitting information and in generating discussion, both within the programme and more widely in society. Such packages are also portable: they can be used by different radio stations, even in different countries. They can also be reformatted, translated and adapted to different contexts.

A final point, and an important one, is the role of charismatic ‘personalities’ in the successful use of radio. This is particularly important where there is a need for translation and contextualization of technical information, to ensure that this is ‘humanized’ and made accessible. By such ‘personalities’ we mean people like Benson Taiwo and Rosina Mbewe, who wear their passion for the medium and for their audience ‘on their sleeve’, so that audiences – and researchers – bond with them straight away.



We also mean people like Angela Nyirenda, who, through her singing, has already created a close bond with her audiences, which can be built on through radio, drawing people in through empathy. Such individuals can act as catalysts to release the unique chemistry of the relationship between broadcaster, audience and researchers. They are able to act as intermediaries between the abstractions of research and the lives of audiences.

There is, we believe, much potential for a better and deeper relationship between researchers, broadcasters and audiences. Radio's unique ability to administer 'a dose of passion' can and should be built into work with researchers investigating technical areas which are important to the lives and livelihoods of audiences. But this must be through a deep and ongoing relationship, not a brief liaison at the end of a project.

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