

The Pag La Yiri Project

Using A Local Radio Station To Inform Rural Communities

Through this project, a small community radio station and an internet connection were installed at the Pag La Yiri women's association in the information-deprived area of Zabré in the east of Burkina Faso. A radio station was necessary because Zabré's local population has difficulty receiving any radio programme at all, let alone one that broadcasts topics about their own region and in their own language.

A faster way of obtaining the latest agricultural information

For the Pag La Yiri women's association, communication from Zabré with the Pag La Yiri headquarters in Ouagadougou is possible via the telephone, but information products have to travel a long and difficult journey over a pothole-ridden road. These problems are common to all the organisations and institutions working in this area.

By using internet and email, Pag La Yiri can now significantly reduce the amount of time it takes to send and receive information (such as the latest agricultural information or health newsletters) from its headquarters in Ouagadougou to the Zabré office. The project has a large capacity development component and will specifically stimulate women to use ICTs. To date, approximately 20 representatives from Pag la Yiri have had basic computer training in addition to being taught how to use the internet and email.

The only local radio station in Zabré

Because national radio and television can hardly be received at all in the Zabré region (within a catchment area of 130 kilometres, there are no radio stations whatsoever), many people tune into the Anglophone radio stations that belong to their Ghanaian neighbours. Nevertheless, as many people only speak local languages such as Mòoré and Bissa, there is a very strong need for a local radio station in Zabré.

Members of Pag La Yiri are being trained to use radio equipment and conduct interviews. As soon as the Pag La Yiri staff have been trained, the radio station will begin broadcasting. Broadcasts will mainly be in local languages, making it more appealing since many listeners do not speak French.



A large radio mast is installed on the grounds of the Pag La Yiri women's association.

Service announcements, but information about health and market prices too

The broadcasts start off by providing service announcements. These announcements mainly contain essential information. This can range from when the baker is in town to when a specific event or market will take place.

Another way in which Pag La Yiri uses the radio station is by broadcasting market price information. Zabré is a rural area and many farmers are keen to hear about the value of their crops.

Finally, the radio station is also helping to create health awareness. Since one of the activities of Pag la Yiri involves giving health information to its members, the plan is to talk about health on the radio station too.

Eventually Pag La Yiri can link the internet to its radio broadcasts: not only will they be able to put their own shows online, they will also be able to make deals with radio



stations in Ouagadougou as well. Stations can then send some of their programmes online to Pag La Yiri which will then broadcast them for the benefit of people living in Zabré. This ensures that people living remote and rural area will also hear the broadcasts from the city.

Run by staff and volunteers

Pag La Yiri is a dynamic women's association that organises literacy programmes, agricultural information and training programmes, agricultural transformation services and pharmaceutical services for women and other groups working in the field of agriculture in the Zabré region.

The project will be run entirely by Pag La Yiri staff members and volunteers. In Zabré, all members are producers themselves. There are no salaried administrative staff members, but active members are rewarded with modest sums whenever possible, and part of their agricultural work is taken over by other members when they spend a lot of time on the association's work.

The direct beneficiaries of the project are the 11,000 members of the women's organisation living in and around Zabré. Indirect beneficiaries include other people from the region (approximately 120,000), non-governmental organisations and associations that work in the area. Indirect and direct economic benefits are expected once the radio is on the air. Pag La Yiri will be able to slash its transport costs between Zabré and the surrounding villages. By providing locally relevant information, the radio may help people in a lot of ways: travel costs can be reduced, people get informed

about market prices and are made aware of training opportunities.

Objectives

The project's main objective is to provide weekly market price information for the 20,000 farmers around Zabré. The market prices will be collected via the internet through partnerships with parties that are experienced in marketing agricultural related goods. Partners are the African Institute of Rural Bio-Economy (IABER), Afrique Verte and SONAGESS, an organisation that manages the national security stock of crops.

Results so far and lessons learned

The project started in 2005. The computer aspect took off rather quickly and the project team has already received extensive training in how to use the computer and multimedia equipment. For the radio broadcasts, however, it took a long time to obtain a broadcasting license. Pag La Yiri finally got its license in 2007 and is now broadcasting test shows to see if everything works properly.

One useful lesson learned by the project team was that using a mill engine instead of a generator for power reduces the amount of petrol and therefore the energy costs. Other lessons are related to the use of computers in rural areas. The absence of a regular internet connection makes it difficult to protect yourself against computer viruses, for instance. In order to make the computers sustainable, many services should be developed ranging from training, word processing and printing to internet connectivity.

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