



# A PASSION FOR VIDEO

25 stories about making, translating, sharing and using videos on farmer innovation







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25 stories about making, translating, sharing and using  
videos on farmer innovation

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## About Access Agriculture

Access Agriculture is an international NGO that works across all developing countries to enable the south-south exchange of and access to quality audio-visual training materials to secure sustainable livelihoods of rural people. Access Agriculture facilitates and builds capacity for the production and translation of quality farmer-to-farmer training videos into local languages. It provides quality training material for rural advisory services and agricultural education systems, and improves access of youth, women, smallholder and marginalised farmers to relevant knowledge.

For more information on Access Agriculture, visit [www.accessagriculture.org](http://www.accessagriculture.org)

## About CTA

The Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) is a joint international institution of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States and the European Union (EU). Its mission is to advance food and nutritional security, increase prosperity and encourage sound natural resource management in ACP countries. It provides access to information and knowledge, facilitates policy dialogue and strengthens the capacity of agricultural and rural development institutions and communities. CTA operates under the framework of the Cotonou Agreement and is funded by the EU.

For more information on CTA, visit [www.cta.int](http://www.cta.int)

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## FOREWORD

Dr Paul Van Mele  
Chairman, Access Agriculture



Since 2013, Access Agriculture has been training young professionals from various organisations in six African countries to make farmer-to-farmer videos. The videos are a way of moving ideas faster, and more clearly, beyond borders. The Access Agriculture website hosts the videos by these young professionals, and by other agencies, if the videos meet Access Agriculture's quality and style standards.

Access Agriculture encourages all organisations working in developing countries to invest in translating videos available on the website into any language. Access Agriculture offers a fee-based translation service to anyone interested in using quality videos in their own farmer training programmes.

The stories in this volume were gathered as part of a Writeshop held in Nairobi on 9–10 November, in the context of the Access Agriculture Week 9–13 November, 2015.

People are story-tellers as well as creatures who walk and make tools. Stories are important to us. Statistics tell us what happened; stories tell us why.

These stories celebrate the creativity of the many organisations involved in making, translating, distributing, and screening videos, as well as those that do follow-up studies, especially the MSc and PhD students that Access Agriculture supports. We learn what it feels like to be involved in one of the more creative efforts in international development and communication. We read, for example, about the radio producer who began to make videos because his father, a Kenyan farmer, said that farmers wanted to see the images, as well as the words.

We learn why farmers in Malawi find videos from West Africa more convincing than learning from lead farmers in their own villages. We read about the journalist in Benin who is so inspired by the videos that he has become a farmer himself. We learn what it's like to translate a video script into an African language, and other personal experiences of getting videos and DVDs into the hands of farmers. Two people wrote about Bangladesh, which is where our style of farmer-to-farmer videos started.

Telling stories is so easy that people fight for the floor, so to speak. Writing stories is harder, but they last longer. In November 2015, 40 people from eight countries in Africa and Asia met near Nairobi. At the writeshop each person told a story and wrote a draft edited by the facilitators. The authors then swapped stories and peer-reviewed each other, incorporating further comments before a final edit by the facilitators. Some of the stories in this book were translated from French.

All of the videos which people write about in this book are available in English, French and other languages for viewing and free download from the Access Agriculture website.









1

## IN OUR OWN LANGUAGE

Eric Babatoundé Allagbe

Videos to train farmers are a success if farmers receive the message and remember it. In Benin in 2007, the French versions of some videos on rice growing were introduced via public video viewings and also on DVDs given to farmers.



*A farmer is much more interested in watching and sharing a video if it is in her own language.*

The farmers who got the DVD were supposed to share the information. The farmers who watched the videos and who understand only their native language did not share the messages from the video.

Some of these farmers can no longer recall the messages and have even forgotten where they put the DVDs.

They did not watch the videos, saying “We do not have TV and DVD players. It is difficult for us to watch the

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**Farmers cannot share information unless they understand it. To be widely shared, videos have to be in the local languages, or at least in a language that the farmers understand.**

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videos again and remember the forgotten parts and talk about them”.

We wondered why farmers did not share knowledge learned from the videos. Was it because they did not have a DVD player? Or because they did not understand the language spoken in the video?

The farmers who understand French (the language spoken in the video), and who know other languages, did share the messages contained in the videos, because these multilingual people can communicate with many people, but especially because they understood the message of the video.

Farmers cannot share information unless they understand it. To be widely shared, videos have to be in the local languages, or at least in a language that the farmers understand.

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## 2

## FARMERS PAY FOR LEARNING VIDEOS

Gérard C. Zoundji

If farmers are willing to pay for their own learning videos, distributing DVDs might become self-sustaining.

I started a pilot experience to sell training DVDs through the existing network of entertainment DVD sellers, agro-input dealers, vegetable sellers, and taxi-moto drivers in Benin.

I started by compiling a series of 9 farmer-to-farmer videos from the Access Agriculture website ([www.accessagriculture.org](http://www.accessagriculture.org)), putting them all onto a single DVD with a language menu, allowing the viewer to watch the videos in French, English and three West African languages (Fon, Yoruba and Bambara).

I had 700 copies of the DVD printed, and called it, "Improving vegetable production". I also pasted a note inside the DVD jacket, with a phone number encouraging viewers to call for further question or comments.

Each of the video distributors signed a contract agreeing to receive the DVD and be paid 200 CFA (0.40 US dollar) after selling it for a minimum price of 500 CFA (1 US dollar), and a top price of \$2. All distributors were asked to keep data such as the name, phone number and address of the person who bought each DVD, so that I could follow up with the buyers.

From August to October 2015, 392 copies of the DVD were sold. About three-fourths of the people who bought the DVD (276 viewers) actually called the phone number pasted into the DVD jacket.

It is highly unusual to get feedback from so many viewers. From August to October 2015, I conducted a telephone survey with those 276 people who had called me.

I was surprised to realise that some of the people were from far away. They were in Nigeria, Niger, Ghana,



Mobile vendors offer Access Agriculture videos for sale alongside entertainment DVDs.



and northern Benin, even though I only offered the DVDs for sale through retailers in the large cities of southern Benin (Cotonou and Porto Novo).

The DVDs were travelling widely, with no encouragement from us. When NGOs distribute training videos, almost all of the DVDs stay in the villages that get them.

The people who bought the DVD had watched the videos, usually several times, with their family and friends. A third of the 276 respondents borrowed DVD players from friends or family to watch the DVD, but I was astounded to learn that nearly 1 person in 5 had bought a DVD player after buying our DVD. All of

In our past experiences, people who receive DVDs for free are not as willing to invest their own time and money buying or borrowing equipment such as DVD-players. We see here that when people spend their own money to buy a DVD, they are more likely to watch the videos, and to invest in video-viewing equipment.

Selling DVDs gives anyone who is interested in agriculture a fair chance to learn from videos, since the DVDs are marketed openly where people can easily find them, and the price is fairly affordable even for a smallholder farmer or an association. On



*An agrodealer explains the “Improving Vegetable Production” DVD to farmers who visit his shop.*

these respondents were willing to pay and to make the effort to watch the training videos.

A few farmers’ associations also bought videos. When farmers or farmers’ associations called they didn’t ask me to clarify the content of the videos, which suggests that they understood the key points and that the local language translations were clear.

Also none of the farmers who called asked for a gift. They did ask where they could find more videos and buy irrigation equipment (one of the videos on the DVD was about drip irrigation). Through an agro-input dealer in Cotonou, which has been selling DVDs, we were able to put those farmers in touch with an Israeli company which sells irrigation equipment in Niger.

the other hand when NGOs distribute videos, some people are chosen to receive DVDs, while some of their neighbours are excluded.

My experience suggests that small-scale retailers can distribute videos to rural people, even without support from donors, and that these DVDs reach farmers who are serious about learning and using the content.

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### 3

## YOU CAN'T INCLUDE EVERYONE: DELETING SCENES WITHOUT LOSING YOUR COLLEAGUES

Irene Tamubula

**M**aking an agricultural training video is harder than it looks. It takes time and involves many people, including farmers, agricultural experts, extensionists, videographers, interviewers, and editors.

The National Organic Agriculture Movement of Uganda (NOGAMU) has already produced three videos and another is at editing stage. When I spoke with the facilitator of these videos, Ms Jane Nalunga, I realised that the challenge is to integrate the knowledge of farmers and other experts while making the video in the shortest time.



*Motivation matters. Different people have their own reasons for wanting to help make a video.*

The key is to find out why each of them wants to help make the videos. Each person is different, however many people from all walks of life are motivated by the chance of appearing on camera. Jane explained that:

“Some farmers participate because they know the people who have asked them to participate; others hope to get a favour from the facilitators.

Others enjoy the thrill of seeing themselves on the video and finally some do it to share what has worked for them. On the other hand, extensionists participate because they anticipate the videos will ease their work of making agricultural information accessible to farmers: making the video available to farmers may mean they have to talk less and may not even have to facilitate the viewing sessions. Others participate because of the excitement of being part of a video”.

Managing these expectations is important, because video makers often film their friends and colleagues, and it is important to maintain these relationships. NOGAMU’s strategy was to rely on their partner organisations. Jane said that:

“To identify farmers and to mobilise the community, I worked with Caritas, Kampala and Sulma Foods, which are organisations that NOGAMU had collaborated with on issues of sustainable agriculture and exporting organic products”.



The good working relationships and trust among the organisations and the facilitator encouraged participants to spare their time and to share their best practices through the videos.

However, working with trusted colleagues is a double-edged sword. It makes the work smoother and you get into the field faster, but sometimes making the video upsets colleagues that one hopes to work with again in the future.

Video editing can be sensitive: eliminating shots of key participants may threaten the filming of future videos and damage relationships.

For example in the video on “Intercropping pineapples” the Local Council Chairman was not included in the final video yet the Council played an important role in mobilising farmers for the focus group discussion and they were also carrying out appropriate intercropping practices.

Jane had the following reason for deleting him:

“The Local Council Chairman was stammering, frowning and repeating himself so I had to eliminate him and keep the other farmers”.



*The video maker may hurt people’s feelings if interviewees are deleted from the final version.*

In another video, “Controlling banana weevils”, the Vice Chairperson was not included in the final video yet he had mobilised farmers for the focus group discussion and taken part in the filming.

He was eliminated because according to the editor, Jane, he was inappropriately dressed, in white clothes, for planting and also he had not been selected for filming.



*Not everyone interviewed is suitable for inclusion in the final edit of the video.*

In the third film, “Solar drying pineapples” the content on “reason for packing the dried fruit in smaller packs” had to be re-filmed because the interviewee, although conversant with the process, was nervous and so another person was filmed.

The people who were edited out of the videos were not pleased with the decision. To maintain the relationship, the facilitator had to explain why they were cut from the final videos.

If a video maker is forced to choose between hurting a colleague’s feelings and making a bad video, most would delete the interview, and then apologise to the person who is left out. But to avoid having to make that decision, video makers work on a well drafted script and then select and prepare the interviewees carefully, before getting out the camera.

People who contribute to organizing farmers, like the chairman and the vice-chairman, are then acknowledged in the end credits of the video.

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## 4

# WILLING TO PAY TO WATCH VIDEOS

Renaud K. Itoo

As the state gets out of extension and the private sector fills some of the void, it is time to ask if farmers will pay for extension.

In developing countries, few farmers ever pay for advice, so it is unclear if private extension is a viable option. As in many developing countries, farmers in Benin have enjoyed free extension.

In southeastern Benin, in a rice-growing area in the Oueme Valley, we had a fantastic experience in six villages: Damè, Mondotokpa, Fingninkanmè, Kodé-Agué, Kadébou-Zounmè and Gogbo.

With financial support from Access Agriculture for my thesis research, we organised a community meeting in each village, during which farmers chose a topic of a learning video they wanted to watch. In five of the villages, farmers chose the video on land preparation, but in Gogbo they asked to see the one on seed flotation.

We held a short meeting with the village head and a few lead farmers to decide when and where to screen the video. They suggested the village green, or the playground of the primary schools in the evening. For several days before the video screenings town criers went around the villages to remind and invite farmers to attend the screening.

The big day finally arrived. The sun was dying slowly in the immense Oueme Lake. As the sunlight faded away, and the moon took its place, loud music called the villagers together. As if coming from nowhere, male and female farmers, young and aged (and their kids) filled the village green, striking a festival-like atmosphere. Everyone quickly took a seat so as not to miss a moment of the video.

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**As if coming from nowhere, male and female farmers, young and aged (and their kids) filled the village green, striking a festival-like atmosphere.**

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The master of ceremonies soon captured the attention of this large and eager audience.

Everyone looked at the screen made for the occasion from a piece of cloth. People smiled as soon as pictures of farmers appeared on the screen. The event lasted about 40 minutes (10 minutes to show the video and 30 minutes to discuss it, and to ask and answer questions). According to the participants, these were 40 minutes of enjoyable learning, discussion, and entertainment.

They all said that they were looking forward to attending similar sessions again. The farmers





*Farmers are willing to pay to watch videos and children are eager to attend public video shows*

wanted to watch other videos on rice and chillies. How can we fulfil the farmers' wish? Could farmers buy the DVDs and watch them on their own in small groups? Could the lead farmers create video clubs to screen videos?

To answer these questions, at the end of each video session, I asked each farmer how much he or she would pay to attend a training video show. The results were far higher than I expected.

All the interviewed farmers were willing to pay to watch videos. Some farmers said they were willing to pay \$2 to attend the screenings. On the low end, some only wanted to pay 5 cents US.

On average farmers are willing to pay 41 cents to watch a video. Male farmers are willing to pay an average of 46 cents while female farmers were willing to pay 25 cents. Some farmers even wanted to buy the DVDs.

Farmer participation in funding extension is not a panacea, but farmers can pay for extension services that are meaningful to them and add value.

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**On average farmers are willing to pay 41 cents to watch a video. Male farmers are willing to pay an average of 46 cents while female farmers were willing to pay 25 cents. Some farmers even wanted to buy the DVDs.**

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It will be useful to do a study in which farmers have to pay with real money to watch a learning video. It is important to think of ways farmers could help pay for the advice they need. This could open the door for self-financing, private extension.

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## 5

# READY, SET, BUREAUCRACY! KICK-STARTING FARMER TRAINING VIDEOS IN EGYPT

Laura Tabet

Egypt is an agricultural country, with over 50% of its population either farming or processing the harvest. As Egypt's population nears 90 million people, the country is not growing enough to feed itself. There is an urgency to enable small-scale farmers to become more productive, and also to create jobs for a young and growing population.

After the Revolution of 2011 and its aftermath, the extension system became almost dysfunctional and could no longer respond to the needs of the farming community. Thus, I co-founded with other motivated people, a social enterprise called Nawaya that offers innovative tools and projects for small-scale farmer empowerment.

I met the Access Agriculture team shortly after the Revolution, at the International Conference on Innovations in Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services held in Nairobi in 2011. I was immediately drawn to work with them—I believe that most solutions already exist, but need testing and adapting to local contexts. In a few minutes, videos allow a farmer to travel and meet other farmers who are dealing with similar challenges and improving their livelihoods and environment.

Inspired by Access Agriculture's philosophy, I immediately set out to meet all the rural and agricultural projects I could find in Cairo: going to donors, government research departments, extension offices, and

universities to promote farmer-to-farmer video as a way to add value to their work and to share much needed good practice.

I did feel that these meetings could lead somewhere—and people were intrigued by such an international platform. However, my enthusiasm was crushed by a long list of bureaucratic processes that kept Access Agriculture from blossoming in Egypt. Government offices needed a paper trail and a series of permissions from their ever-changing list of superiors. After the Revolution, it became especially difficult to create partnerships between local organisations and foreign NGOs and to be filming videos in the tense political climate.

Donor programmes would have to restructure their communications and publications activities to make room for training videos. Nawaya became a video production partner to Access Agriculture, which wants the groups it trains to become self-driven video-makers. But we could not be hired locally to produce videos, because we did not have the right

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registrations or mass communication certifications to register our video activities.

If you have a camera, people assume that you are a journalist, and we did not even have filming permits so there would be a risk if we were ever questioned by the authorities.

Nevertheless, Nawaya and UNIDO staff were trained by Access Agriculture and produced 6 videos in 2 years. We adopted a bottom-up approach to cope with bureaucracy.

The first six topics we selected were “low-lying fruits” – easy to film within our own project activities, therefore requiring less external coordination and planning.

We chose topics of high interest to the average Egyptian farm family, like disease control in home-raised chicken, donkey health or fighting the red palm weevil infestations. We could then use these videos to reach out to a larger audience and to sway reluctant production partners.

In hindsight, I had underestimated how much time it would take to introduce farmer-to-farmer videos at the management level and how much resistance we could face, even with an already proven and effective extension method.

Most rural development programmes have used training videos as promotional tools, so our first challenge was to explain that Access Agriculture videos highlight small-scale farmers, rather than the opinion of technical engineers. We said that the videos could not promote a programme, donor or product, but only the innovation and why it works, as explained by small-scale farmers.

Many contract farming programmes or large donor-driven programmes implement new technologies from the top-down, and do not encourage farmer-driven innovations—making the search for filming content difficult. When filming you must always find a trustworthy entry point into a community, and we were at loss on how to start.

We discovered that many rural development programmes do not collaborate with each other in sharing curricula or lessons learned, creating a vacuum in understanding the real farmer training needs versus their programme objectives.

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There is no extension network in Egypt that regroups all rural stakeholders to prioritise video topic selection. Most programmes funded by foreign donors simply follow project application criteria set by larger institutions.

In such contexts it would be easy to create simple promotional videos on various technologies and practices and satisfy donors or government programme, but how could we identify the most needed learning gaps to empower smallholder farmers? How could we find innovative farmers who were also willing to spread their knowledge on camera with us strangers?

It became much easier for us to kickstart video production once we had developed local content on topics like how to press dried dates, and managing the red palm weevil. Egyptian farmers relate to videos of their fellow Egyptian farmers speaking with such knowledge and pride. Once we had made a few videos we began to snowball from there, using community video screenings to identify topics and farmers to interview.

The impact was immediate: farmers directly involved in Nawaya activities were interested in using video as a way to express themselves. Egypt is a media-oriented country and every household has a satellite TV. We created a small scriptwriting team, and creative



*Videos on topics such as donkey health are of great interest to every Egyptian farm family.*



*It is easier to develop content for videos when you have good colleagues.*

and humorous ways of transmitting messages about sustainable farming started to develop.

To increase interest in video requires that you take the time to talk to your colleagues and farmers on the benefits that video can bring in training activities, advocacy, awareness raising and even promotional efforts. As we are discovering now, maybe the best way to start is to have fun with it!

We promote farmer-to-farmer videos at many levels, even going door to door, but proactive networking, attending meetings and video planning take considerable time. Although it might not lead to immediate results, keeping good relationships with diverse partners has led us to connect to the few enthusiastic individuals within the bureaucracies.

This helps to forward our efforts. For example, we are now collaborating with knowledgeable experts in agricultural research departments, and committed university professors who guide us on script content.

At Nawaya, we will keep exploring how to integrate videos across diverse activities, building confidence

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**As we are discovering now, maybe the best way to start is to have fun with it!**

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and success. At the same time we do not waste energy fighting the hurdles of bureaucracy or narrow-minded training approaches, because that delays the important work. Nawaya remains dedicated to integrating the Access Agriculture philosophy and building a network of production partners and farmers who can share good practices that bridge knowledge gaps.

We aim to empower millions of Egyptian small-scale farmers using video.

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## 6

## FINDING THE WORDS

Mark Maiga

In September 2015, Access Agriculture invited us to a translation workshop.

Before the workshop, we received scripts in English so we could translate them into Luganda, one of the major languages in Uganda.

As soon as the script popped into my email, I got to work, happily translating the text, word-for-word. I was able to finish the work in time and hand it in before the workshop began. As it turns out, that was the easy part.

During the workshop, we were put into groups of three. In my group all the participants were to translate from English into Luganda. We had to finish the scripts before we could start recording the voices.

One of my partners at the workshop read through my script, and said “We have to fix this script, so that the people who speak any one of the dialects of Luganda can understand it.”

You see, Luganda is a language with many dialects and some of the words I had written are only found in my dialect. Luganda’s four main dialects are: Busiro/Kyaddondo, Bannakyaggwe, Bannabuddu, and Abakooki.

Words can be quite different between the dialects. For example, some people call a container “seppiki” while in other dialects it is “obulobo”. In some

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You see, Luganda is a language with many dialects and some of the words I had written are only found in my dialect. When making a translation it is important to find words that everyone knows.

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dialects, people call pruning “okusalira” while others say “okuwawaagulira”.

The Baganda are a proud people, and some of them might not want to admit that they do not understand a word.

My fellow translators helped me to find words that are widely understood. I had to change almost the whole script. We finally came up with the right script. Not all speakers of a language understand the same words, but it is often possible to find words that are common to all of the dialects of a language.

When making a translation it is important to find words that everyone knows.

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7

## MY FATHER TAUGHT ME TO OPEN MY EYES

Musdalafa Lyaga

My father has always loved farming. He is 72 years old, but the smell of the farm, the sounds from the barn, and the whistles of the breeze blowing through the plants still bring a smile to his face. Sadly, his love for the land is no longer enough to keep his farm going. Hard work on the farm does not guarantee success.

Farmers continue to face many challenges ranging from low yields, poor soil fertility, land degradation, lack of markets, pests and diseases, and extreme weather due to climate change. Thus farmers now need new information, now more than ever on how to solve issues affecting them and to adopt new farming practices.

One of the biggest challenges in Kenyan agriculture is how to get relevant information to farmers using a medium they can easily access. To reach out to the farmer, various media have been used with varied success.

In Africa, radio is commonly referred to as the “farmer’s best friend”. This is mainly because it is portable and has no boundaries. It is the only medium which allows farmers to do their chores while listening to farming information.

Farmers take radios with them when milking and even during the day of working in the fields. It is not

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In Africa, radio is commonly referred to as the “farmer’s best friend”. This is mainly because it is portable and has no boundaries.

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uncommon to see a radio hanging on the branch of a tree. Unfortunately, radio lacks a crucial ingredient: visuals. Showing a picture of a Striga weed is much easier, and more accurate, than describing what it looks like.

I produce radio programmes for farmers. My programme airs every Thursday on Kenya’s national broadcaster, Kenya Broadcasting Corporation. Just when the farm family has finished dinner and they are preparing to go to bed, I give them something to sleep on.

My father is my biggest fan and my greatest critic. I take him seriously because I know his voice represents that of other farmers. One day as we shared a cup of coffee he said, “For a farmer, seeing is believing, son. Farmers need to see what you are talking about. We cannot see the soil you are talking about, or tell what kind of cows the farmer has and these are what matters most to us”. This encouraged me to start working with illustrated media.





*Video gives a personal touch to stories about farmers and their innovations.*

When you put some clever words together, and add some nice pictures in a creative layout, you have a magazine. This is a portable medium which can easily explain step by step certain farmer innovations. As the

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**One day as we shared a cup of coffee my father said, “For a farmer, seeing is believing, son. Farmers need to see what you are talking about”.**

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literacy levels continue to rise in Africa, more farmers are turning to magazines as a source of information on how they can improve their livelihoods.

It dawned on me that I can transcribe my radio programmes, complete with photos of farmers and their innovations, and publish them on our Magazine, *The Organic Farmer Magazine*. The Magazine carries stories on farmer innovations, experiences and success stories on ecological, sustainable agriculture. The editor liked the idea. Listeners now have a chance to see visuals of my programme and even store the stories for future reference. They can see photos of different animal breeds, farming innovations, diseases and pests in fine colour photographs.

With time, from my experience of working in radio and observing farmers reading the magazine, I realised that despite the advantages of the magazine, radio is still a more personal media. Magazine lacks the human feel to it. Lack of audio gives it a detached touch which has been a turn off to many farmers.

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**Videos are becoming increasingly popular among farmers. They are based on the concept that a farmer always looks over her fence to her neighbour’s field to see what she can learn.**

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Videos are becoming increasingly popular among farmers. They are based on the concept that a farmer always looks over her fence to her neighbour’s field to see what she can learn. The videos show stories of ordinary farmers, facing challenges which other farmers are facing and the steps that they take to solve the problem. This is more personal because you get to see real people, hear the emotions in their voices and see them work towards a solution.

Lady luck smiled at me when I was among the few chosen ones selected to undergo a farmer-to-farmer video training by Access Agriculture. I was trained to write scripts, produce, edit and disseminate videos. It was wonderful working and sharing experiences with other colleagues from Africa on video production. We produced and disseminated a farmer training video on how to add value to kale by drying it and then selling it when prices rise during dry season. My greatest joy came after finishing the video, and listening to the excited voices of the farmers as they discussed what they were seeing on the screen.

In Africa where many households lack electricity or cannot afford the equipment to watch videos, many farmers are missing out on this great medium. Fortunately, there are now projectors with rechargeable batteries which can be used to screen farmer-to-farmer videos. Still, more could be done to ensure that more farmers benefit from video. Some farmers are also starting to watch videos on their cell phones.

You may wonder which medium is the farmers’ best friend? The jury is still out there. Perhaps the solution is to have as many friends as possible. Combined, the different media may be able to achieve the greatest impact on the farm.

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## 8

## THE VIDEO TRICYCLE

Raymond Vuol

Not too long ago I realised that I had produced and translated quite a lot of agricultural training videos that could not get to farmers living in very remote areas.

So first, I tried using the mobile information vans belonging to the Ministry of Information and the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, but when I tried to work with the ministries, I noticed that their vehicles could not get to some communities due to bad roads.

One day as I was moving around town, I saw a pick-up with a covered bed full of cargo. It was doing a good job moving things around. Then I said to myself “if only I could add a set of storage boxes onto the bed of a motorised cargo tricycle, then I could use it to carry video screening tools to rural areas.”

So I decided to use my own savings to buy a tricycle, like the kind used to carry cargo. With a lot of Chinese companies now selling motor bikes in Ghana, it is easy to find a motorised tricycle.

I got a welder to cover the bed of the tricycle, and a carpenter to design compartments for the screening tools. Then I bought the tools for screening, including a generator, two DVD players, a projector, a projector screen, and a loud speaker.

After I had put all these together, I found a young man named Adam Mutawakilu who had a degree

in agriculture and needed a job. So I hired him as the screening officer, to ride the tricycle to remote communities to show videos. I hired Diana Ngog to be the screening coordinator. She monitors and directs the screening activities.

With Adam Mutawakilu’s knowledge in agriculture, he is able to respond to some of the questions farmers ask during screening. During the show, Adam fills out an attendance form to record the number of communities he visited, the number of men, women and children present, the date of screening, the phone numbers of the leaders of local farmer organisations, and he takes voice recordings of farmers who want to ask questions.

Sometimes we produce our own videos with partners, or download videos from the Access Agriculture website, and burn them onto DVDs. We partner with other NGOs in determining which communities to visit and the videos to show. These NGOs are already working with farmers in rural areas. The Ministry of Food and Agriculture also helps to select the communities and what kind of videos to show.

We then go to the communities with a variety of videos. But when we get to the communities we also try to take into account the farmer’s opinion. Many languages are spoken in northern Ghana, and we try to show the videos in a language they understand.

When Adam starts to screen videos for 60 communities, he may not come back to base for 2 months. Diana stays in the office, but she phones Adam every day to make sure that he is at post. Whenever Adam needs some money for fuel, Diana does the transfer.

If there are any problems, she moves in to resolve them. If equipment breaks down, Diana takes some money from the office to replace it, or takes an engineer for repairs.

After screening videos in 60 communities, Adam comes back to the office with 60 attendance forms that he filled out in the field. Diana goes through all 60 forms and compiles a summary report on the

- Other equipment (projector, DVD players, loud speaker, generator, stabiliser, camp bed and mosquito net.): \$2500

Total \$6200. This is only \$25 if divided by the 244 communities reached so far.

Now my operational costs:

It takes about 15 litres of fuel to fill the tank of the tricycle. A full tank can go about 150 kilometres. With \$30, the tricycle can travel about 150 kilometres.

For \$20 we can operate the generator for about 30 hours. Adam and Diana are each paid \$15 per community.



*An entrepreneurial young person with a 3-wheeled motorcycle can show videos all evening for \$40.*

total number of communities visited, and the number of persons present: men, women and children. After the whole screening project is completed, I then go round to do an impact assessment.

In all, we have reached 60,720 farmers, covering 244 communities since 2013. So with just a tricycle, and two people, we have been able to improve access to farmer training videos in rural communities.

The costs included:

- A tricycle: \$2500
- The wood work: \$500
- The metal work: \$799

So a community can be reached for under \$40, counting only the operational costs. While at the end of the day, costs will depend on the distance of each village, and how many communities the tricycle can reach before it wears out.

The tricycle can reach a community for about \$50 or \$60. The knowledge that the communities gain can be priceless.

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## 9

# I BOUGHT IT—IT'S MINE

Romuald Ulrich Assogba

**B**oko and Jean are two rice growers in Benin. Boko is 58 years old and has been producing rice seed for more than 35 years in central Benin.

Jean is a 28-year-old farmer who has grown rice for over 10 years. When they heard on the local radio stations that rice training videos were available at the shops of the Radio Ilema in Dassa and Collines FM in Glazoue, the two farmers went to check it out.

Boko received two DVDs for free at the radio station in Dassa, less than 1 km away from his house. Jean left his house 8 km from the radio station of Glazoue to buy both of the rice training DVDs for \$2.

The videos were made by the Africa Rice Center and released in 2009 to farmers through several rural radio stations. They were all given the option of either distributing the videos for free, or selling them.

Many farmers and other interested people went to the distribution points to get copies of the DVDs.

At home, Boko brought out his TV around 8 PM to watch his new videos. As soon as Boko started, his wives, his children and some village neighbours gathered around the TV. Two days later, his brother François came to him and asked to borrow the DVDs. Boko loaned them to him without any reservation.

A few days later it was his friend and fellow member of the farmer organisation who came to borrow the

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**“Any person interested in the videos, even my mother-in-law, will have to watch the videos right there at my place. No one will go away with my DVDs.”**

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DVDs to watch them with his family. Within 3 months more than 15 farmers borrowed the DVDs from Boko.

After a year, Boko lost both his DVDs because he can no longer remember the last person who borrowed them from him. He went back to the radio station of Ilema and learned that the videos were no longer available.

Another day while listening to radio Collines FM of Glazoue, he heard that they had DVDs for sale for \$2. Boko asked his first wife Sica to buy him new DVDs at the radio shop.

After getting his second set of the DVDs, Boko refused to loan them to anyone. He was afraid of losing his DVDs again or getting them back scratched or damaged. He spent money on them and would like to keep them for a long time.

When Boko showed us the DVDs, he stressed, “If I had not taken good care of these ones, I would have lost them as well or found them scratched”. Then he put

one of the DVDs into his player and I saw that the DVDs were still in good condition.

As I was leaving, I asked him for the last time, “What would you do if your brother or an in-law asks to borrow the DVDs from you?”

His response was prompt “Any person interested in the videos, even my mother-in-law, will have to watch the videos right there at my place. No one will go away with my DVDs.”

As for Jean, he installed his video equipment and TV in his living room where he often watched the videos alone and from time to time with his wives and a few friends. But he firmly refused to let his DVDs out of his house. In fact Jean said he went to buy his DVDs at the radio station because the leaders of his farmer association only let certain members watch the DVDs.

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### In my study, of the 32 farmers who bought DVDs, less than 10 loaned their DVDs to relatives and friends.

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Jean said, “Once the DVDs stayed with the secretary of the farmer organisation for 3 months while other members and I were waiting for our turn. When I went to the secretary to tell him that he is not doing right, he told me that I am too young to say that, and I should learn to respect my elders, and that I can go buy my own DVDs if I wish”.

Two weeks later Jean went to the shop at the radio station in Glazoue, where he bought the DVDs. He said he is happy to have his own DVD and he can now watch it whenever he wants.

Currently the DVDs of the farmer organisation are not working properly and members as well as friends come to Jean’s place to watch the videos.

Jean never lets his DVDs go out of his house. As an example, he told us this: “One day, a woman of the Union of Rice Growers of Zou-Collines came to borrow my DVDs to make copies. I firmly refused because the radio people often communicate that the DVDs cannot be duplicated and anyone who does that will be sentenced”.



*Take care of precious objects, including DVDs—it may not be possible to replace them.*

Like Boko and Jean, many farmers who bought the DVDs don’t share them with any of the other farmers. In my study, of the 32 farmers who bought DVDs, less than 10 loaned their DVDs to relatives and friends.

This is how I came to realise that farmers who bought the DVDs treated them as precious properties and were reluctant to loan them to other farmers (although they were happy to share the content, by letting people visit their home to watch the videos).

These farmers still have their DVDs, while those who loaned them to others have lost theirs or the disk has been damaged as it passed through several hands. Farmers who buy their DVDs take good care of them.

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10

## WHEN STUDENTS MAKE FARMER TRAINING VIDEOS

Simon N. Mutonga

In Kenya, a single extension worker has to reach out to nearly 2000 farmers, making it impossible to give meaningful training to everyone. The extension workers simply cannot give farmers the information and skills needed to improve farm livelihoods.

We all know that farmers love to learn from each other. They like to see what their neighbours do, and try new ideas. But even so, each farmer only has so many neighbours.

That is why it is such a great idea to make videos with farmers, for farmers, in other parts of the country and beyond. Filming farmers is a powerful way to reach other farmers, showing them how others solve problems.

Such videos can help farmers to learn from their peers, locally and regionally. In 2013, I was among the lucky ones within my university to get trained by Access Agriculture in the production of farmer training videos. It was a thrilling experience for me. I saw an opportunity for me as a lecturer to make meaningful impact on farmers. This in turn would improve the farmer's livelihoods.

The farmers we showed the videos to, liked them very much. I set out on a mission: to train my students to make such videos. I teach communication technology courses to students at the university so it was easy

for me to get students to start making videos to use with farmers.

I teach students in three levels: diploma, bachelors and masters. I show all three groups how to make agricultural videos and then upload them on the Agtube website. This way, the students get excited about actually engaging with farmers. Students love it when they find that what they do is useful and that other students learn from them. It is a fun way to learn. Each video uploaded in the site is graded. This is a deliberate integration of videos in the curriculum.

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**Filming farmers is a powerful way to reach other farmers, showing them how others solve problems.**

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I take the masters group through the steps in shooting farmer-to-farmer videos. This includes factsheet writing, validating the fact sheets with farmers in the field, scriptwriting, shooting and editing. These activities are very enjoyable. Students get to interact with farmers on a one-to-one basis. They get to understand the importance of keeping it simple. It is a huge learning experience for them. One student said, "Now I know that keeping it simple is better than complex academic reports".



“Wow! This is beautiful!” I heard a student say that when she was asked to go to the field to film a farmer. Filming allows students and farmers to spend time together. It is an exciting venture, where students bond with each other and with farmers. Students are thrilled to think that they are making a meaningful impact on farmers.

On the other hand, the farmers are very happy to see that universities are interested in using them as teachers of other farmers (and of students). This is a huge motivation for them. They actually do not need any payment for taking part in the video.

When we finish the videos we return to the communities to share the videos with the farmers, who are delighted to see the videos. The farmers seem excited and they relate with the innovations presented in



*University students learn about filming and farming by making a video with a community.*

the videos. After viewing videos, farmers ask, “Do you have a video on dairy cattle feeding ... raising chickens ... making bee hives?” Videos presented in the local tongue are well received and make it easier to adopt innovations.

I have made a deliberate move to ask students to visit and view videos on the Access Agriculture and AgTube websites. I have downloaded over 40 Access Agriculture videos. I select a few and show them to the students in my class. These videos have aroused a lot of interest with students. “Video is very useful. It makes learning practical skills seem so easy to handle”, one student said after a show.

I always guide them to the Access Agriculture website to view more videos. I have gone a level higher now. I am sending students to view a particular video. I then

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**It is an exciting venture, where students bond with each other and with farmers. Students are thrilled to think that they are making a meaningful impact on farmers.**

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ask them to download the script. If the script is not available, I ask them to transcribe and translate it into their local language. To do this, I group students from the same ethnic groups to do the translation into their language. Though this is challenging and involving, it is interactive and exciting.

Students like the videos, and think that they are practical for farmers. Students also really get interested in taking part in making videos.

Everything has a challenge. My main challenge for this work is the lack of funds. But we are so interested that we spend some of our own money making the videos. So the videos are a learning experience for students, not just for farmers. Time is limited, but we make time for this work. Internet connectivity is another challenge, but students can access the free university internet when there are few users.

The story does not end with the students. The university has recognised the good work being done with the videos and I was approached to train lecturers on how to write extension materials for farmers. These lecturers write for the “Seeds of Gold” column in the *Daily Nation Newspaper*. The participants appreciate the “keep it simple” principle and the focus group interactions that helped them see how farmers see the message.

I take every opportunity to ask students and other stakeholders to like and comment on the posts in the social media sites. These include Facebook and Twitter. I also share agricultural photographs or video clips via WhatsApp.

The farmer-to-farmer videos have had a big impact on my teaching, and on my students, many of whom will be the next generation of extension workers.

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11

## IT WILL TAKE TIME BEFORE ELETINA WATCHES HER VIDEO

Tamanda Chabvuta

Eletina Cosmas, a smallholder farmer, lives in Chamama village, 42 kilometres from the small market town of Kasungu in Malawi.

She lives in one of the most remote rural areas of Malawi, where water is a borehole away and electricity is something never heard of. On a 2.5-acre farm, she grows pigeon peas, soya and maize. These food crops sustain Eletina and her children throughout the year.

On a hot, sunny Tuesday morning we meet Eletina as she walks from her pigeon pea garden. In this garden she has mixed pigeon peas with maize, one way of growing different crops on the same land whilst replenishing the fertility of the soil, a practice that many farmers in the area follow. Agronomists call this “intercropping pigeon peas with maize.”

We are meeting Eletina for one reason: to film her working with her pigeon peas and maize. We hope that by the end of the day we will have a farmer-training video to pass on to other farmers.

Eletina seems exhausted as she approaches us. With brief introductions, she leads us to her home a short distance away, where she starts getting ready to be filmed for the interview on the video. As she gets prepared, I ask her about how work on the farm is going.



*Access to digital communication devices is exploding in rural Africa, but some people are better connected than others.*

“It’s all going alright. I am just so tired after the planting today. Hopefully I will finish planting tomorrow,” she explains, as she quietly put away her mobile phone. This explains why we had trouble getting in touch with Eletina a few days ago. The phone seems to be worn out and to have had better days.

As she continues to get ready, she explains to us how she had not charged her phone in 3 days as she needs to pay for the charging and did not have enough money to pay for a charging session.



*You can watch a video on an ordinary cell phone, if you have one.*

After we complete the briefing of the video project and right before we set the camera rolling Eletina seems to be confused. She asks “How do I get to watch this video after you are finished doing it?”

My colleague and I assure her that as soon as we finish editing we will make her a copy on a DVD so she can watch it with her friends. We continue setting up the camera and get ready to roll, but Eletina looks even more confused. She still shows that face of confusion.

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### “How do I get to watch this video after you are finished doing it?”

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“But then, how though? I do not have any television in my home,” she says. “Even if I were to go ask that they play the video at the video-showing centre near the market, I can’t be seen anywhere near that place. There’s a bottle store right next to it. There are always drunkards there and I don’t want to have people getting suspicious and speaking ill of me,” she further explains.

“What about watching it with some of your club members?” I ask, because Eletina is a member of an organised farmers’ club in her village. Through this club, she is able to access extension and share ideas on good agricultural practices with fellow farmers.

Eletina explains that none of the members of her club has a television set. There is no electricity in the area, and few farmers have enough money to buy a solar panel. Even if any of the villagers can afford

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“I can’t be seen anywhere near the video screening centre. There’s a bottle store right next to it. There are always drunkards there and I don’t want to have people getting suspicious and speaking ill of me”.

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an expensive power generator, it will still be costly to keep it running because of the high costs of fuel.

Eletina still agrees to let us film her for the video. And after the filming, we say good-bye and ask about coming back for another filming session in a week’s time after the crop in her garden germinates.

As we drive away, I keep thinking about Eletina. She is the first farmer we have filmed, because we are still at the beginning of our videos for the Videos for Farmers project. Eletina is like many of the other smallholder farmers of Malawi, where one extension officer may have to reach 3,000 farmers. So using videos as a tool for extension may be the best option for farmers like her to access information.

I still ponder the possibility of having farmers like Eletina watch these videos. What if there was a way in which they can generate power within their communities? What if we had a battery operated mobile projector that we moved around with?

Or better yet, what if she had a simple smart phone that could be loaded with many training videos for her to watch at any time? Maybe she and her fellow farmers from her club will finally get to watch these videos.

We drive away quietly. But one thing still sticks in my mind: it will take time before Eletina gets to watch her videos.

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12

## NO LAUGHING MATTER: VIDEOS THAT BLEND HUMOUR, DRAMA AND MACHINERY IN BANGLADESH

Timothy J. Krupnik

Agricultural scientists need to convey their research results to farmers, though they are unfortunately not always well equipped to do so. Academic training can encourage scientists to focus on minute technical details that are not necessarily relevant to farmers, who are interested in the practicalities of growing crops. On the other hand, the farmers have information and experience that could make the scientist's innovations easier to use, but few farmers can easily access researchers.

Farmers and scientists can bridge this gap by working together to produce videos that tell stories of relevance to farmers while presenting research results. Television and video can also reach large audiences quickly.

Between 2012 and 2014, CIMMYT and the NGO Agricultural Advisory Society, partnered to show videos on using small agricultural machinery for planting rice, wheat, maize, and legumes. The videos were shot in documentary format, and included narrative punctuated by farmer interviews.

They were designed to raise awareness about the machinery, with specific attention on how planting by machine can reduce costs while increasing productivity. The level of technical detail was general, serving to introduce the topic, but without explaining how to operate the machinery. Working together, videos

were screened at village roadsides, tea stalls, and community centres. We were successful at reaching farmers at scale, with over 86,000 farmers watching the videos during a 4-month preliminary campaign.

In follow up sessions we asked farmers how the videos could be made more effective. They requested more technical detail so that they could study the videos themselves and learn how to operate the machines without additional training. They added that the videos should be more entertaining and enjoyable. Several farmers suggested that humorous or dramatic videos with technical content that mimicked South Asian television shows could be effective.

Combining fictional stories and training messages in videos, however, called for a rethink of how we approached film development. Rather than interview farmers and weave their comments into a narrative, we now had to develop creative scripts from scratch, while assuring the right level of scientific detail. Considering that researchers are not trained to be the best storytellers, this was no simple task.

So we collaborated with Mati-o-Manush, a popular, agriculturally oriented television programme, and worked alongside farmers, some of whom later performed as actors in the videos. After meetings with farmers who used the machinery, we developed stories and scripts that we verbally pre-tested,

critiqued, and rewrote with help from the same farmer groups. We aimed to develop scripts that balanced storytelling with relevant technical information. After shooting, videos were screened to audiences of scientists and farmers, and again revised.

The result has been five new videos on planting, irrigation, and harvesting equipment, each filmed in comic-drama format, using both professional and farmer actors. Take for example the video on using mechanical bed planters to sow crops on long beds that alternate with furrows for channelling irrigation water.

In this story, Halim is a handsome single man looking to marry. He is also a bed planter owner who uses the machine to sell land preparation and planting services to other farmers. One day, while driving the bed planter to a field, he happens upon a respected older villager named Balu, who is intrigued by the machine, and decides to try it out by hiring Halim to sow his field.

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The result has been five new videos on planting, irrigation, and harvesting equipment, each filmed in comic-drama format, using both professional and farmer actors.

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During planting, Halim takes time to show each component of the machine to Balu, explaining how to operate and calibrate the bed planter to apply the right rate of seed and fertiliser, and how to irrigate by furrow. Balu's curiosity leads him to ask more questions, and Halim eventually details the business model he uses to attract farmers to earn income. Balu is impressed, but Halim's motivations are not entirely business oriented – as he is interested in marrying Balu's daughter, Tarana. By earning Balu's respect and demonstrating that he is a competent farmer and businessman, he earns Tarana's hand in marriage.



*Training videos boost farmers' interest in seeing how bed planters work in practice.*





*Spicing the message up with a bit of light drama.*

In another video, we tackle how important it is to harvest rice quickly so that the subsequent wheat crop can be planted on time to achieve higher yields. Farmers however face difficulty in timely harvesting because of the heavy labour burden of hand cutting their fields, not to mention the hard work. We therefore developed a story about Kashem. His wife Mina finds him relaxing at home, rather than harvesting rice. She is worried they won't be able to plant wheat on time.

Kashem also can't afford to pay others to harvest his rice, but he has just enough cash to hire Jamal Mia to use his mechanical rice reaper to rapidly harvest his crop. During a work break under the shade of a tree, Jamal Mia describes how to turn it on and operate the reaper, before explaining how reaping is fast and inexpensive compared to the drudgery of hand harvesting.

In this way, Jamal Mia has no problem harvesting his own field, and also finding farmer-clients willing to pay him to reap theirs too. In the end of the video, Kashem manages not only to harvest rice and then plant wheat on time, but also decides to save up to purchase a reaper and go into business, much to the approval of his wife.

So far, farmers like the videos. They tend to be more engaged in the film screenings, with audiences laughing at the subtle cultural jokes built into the scripts. We've also noticed that farmers ask fewer questions about how the machinery works; rather, they ask where they can buy or access equipment for use in their own fields. Mohammad Rafiqul, a farmer who saw the videos, commented, "I was inspired and

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One firm used the films for marketing campaigns aired on local cable TV channels during Eid holidays, with an estimated viewership of about 75,000 people in just 11 days.

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bought the machine, though at first my family was against the investment."

Television stations were also more interested in the videos, reasoning that even training videos must compete with popular Bollywood movies or television soap operas. Companies selling machines also saw their value. One firm, Metal Limited, used the films for marketing campaigns aired on local cable TV channels during Eid holidays, with an estimated viewership of about 75,000 people in just 11 days.

Use of dramatic-comic formats, however, is not without drawbacks. Videos produced this way tend to be regionally or nationally relevant, as they are purposely formatted to appeal to farmers' specific cultural and entertainment interests. They may therefore be more difficult to transfer and use in different countries or cultural contexts, even after translation and dubbing, which is also more difficult with drama than with documentaries, and will limit how many language versions the video can have.

As such, projects aiming to scale-out research recommendations through training videos should carefully assess what format is most relevant for the types of farmers they are working to affect. Within Bangladesh, however, dramatic and humorous farmer-training videos are no laughing matter. When carefully developed with appropriate input, testing, and revision with farmers, they can deliver both entertainment and core training messages appropriately, much to farmers' amusement.

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13

## LEARNING MORE FROM VIDEOS THAN FROM LEAD FARMERS

Vinjeru Nyirenda

When I set out for my student research, I did not anticipate learning much that I had not already read in the literature, because I thought farmers would be too shy to speak their minds. It turned out quite the opposite.

I also read that there were simply not enough extension workers to train individual farmers in Malawi. This turned out to be true. Even though the government extension workers conduct individual visits, there are too few of them to reach all farmers. Hence the Department of Agriculture introduced lead farmers as a way to help extension workers reach farmers, because lead farmers live within the communities.

However I learned that farmers neither trust nor listen to their lead farmers. This was during my first field visit. I did all of my field work with an organisation called NASFAM (National Smallholder Farmers' Association of Malawi).

Most farmers said that lead farmers are engaged with many agriculture NGOs. These lead farmers are not chosen by fellow farmers; they are wealthy farmers who receive resources from the agricultural NGOs. The lead farmers do not share the stuff they receive, they do not explain all the topics they learn about, but they accept new farming practices in order to receive free farming equipment. One farmer

pointed out to me that one lead farmer caters to 10 NGOs. As a result, lead farmers are set apart from the community.

However, I read that videos are able to reach many people at once. Videos are not biased towards an individual in a community. So I started to try and understand how farmers receive videos.

I talked to the farmers about the video which I wanted to show them, on fighting Striga and improving soil fertility. I wanted to find out the local practices used to control Striga, and what farmers knew on the methods to fight Striga.

Most of the farmers told me that they had no particular method because to them Striga was just



*Gifts of equipment and livestock may help to attract lead farmers, but also to alienate them from the neighbours they are supposed to teach.*

a simple weed, that would go away by itself. At the end of my interviews with the farmers I simply told them, “I can’t wait to hear your stories after watching the Striga video”.

It took me nearly 20 days to get all the screening equipment, and to talk to my peers and supervisors to prepare for my next visit. I went back to show farmers the video on fighting Striga and improving soil fertility. Few villages in Malawi have electricity, so I took a small generator and a projector. I used farmer clubs to show the videos. During this second visit, I went to two committee areas that have 10 clubs of 10 members each. The first day the generator failed. However, I was lucky because one of the farmers owned a television set, which I used.

There are 10 Striga videos and I showed 3 of them. So many farmers came on the first day that I asked the ones who came from afar to watch first. One farmer was 58 years old and he told me he travelled nearly 28 kilometres to watch the video. I did not believe him, so at the end of the day, we went together to drop him at home, only to discover he was telling the truth.

After screening the videos, I talked to individual farmers immediately, in order to see what they knew. The farmers had learned a lot by watching the videos.

I wondered what the 58-year-old farmer found most interesting in the videos. He told me that he learned that Striga was a weed that sucked nutrients from crops. He liked seeing the way people were working together to fight Striga, and he saw the actual colours of the flowers of both kinds of Striga. He said that the farmers were comfortable in front of the camera and that the methods to fight Striga were clear and simple to follow.

Most of the farmers I talked to said that the videos were good and of the right length (about 15 minutes). The videos did not take up much of their farming and business time. Farmers also appreciated the dances shown in the videos, which were entertaining. Farmers welcomed the videos, because they saw clearly how fellow farmers faced similar problems and how others dealt with Striga in simple ways which these farmers could also use.

I was still curious, so I went back after 30 days to see how well the farmers remembered what they watched,

what methods they were practicing from the videos, and what they thought about using videos to learn. When I arrived I had a chat with the 58-year-old farmer. He told me he arrived at 8 AM, hoping to watch the video again. However, I told him that I was there for a chat. He was sad, because he was expecting to watch the same video or a different one on agriculture. He told me, it would be important to re-watch, in order to be reminded.

During this third visit some farmers asked me to visit their farms, to see that no Striga had grown and that the crops were growing well, because they practiced the methods they watched on the videos. Nearly 60 farmers asked me, but I only had time to visit five of them. Two women with neighbouring farms were able to work together to remove Striga. One farmer stressed the clarity of the videos and how easy it was to follow their ideas.



*Farmers were keen to show what they had learned from videos about controlling the parasitic weed Striga.*

Farmers can learn more from videos than from a lead farmer, especially if the lead farmer is chosen by a project, not by the community, and if the lead farmers are motivated by the equipment they receive, not by a desire to share ideas with their neighbours.

A farmer from a foreign country, speaking on a video, may be more convincing than the lead farmers right there in the village.

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## SHOWING VIDEOS WITHOUT ELECTRICITY

Donald Tchaou

The Access Agriculture website offers a variety of videos with useful information that is not always known to many farmers in my country of Benin. The videos are short, easy to understand and available in some of my country's local languages.

My association (Youth Action for Development) has often reflected on how to disseminate these videos to remote areas and we decided to make public video viewings to reach many farmers at once. This is our contribution to the development of the agricultural sector of the municipality of Natitingou.

But before projecting videos, it was first necessary to identify and select those that would be useful to farmers there. We visited farmers' vegetable fields to discuss and see the challenges they face. They talked about many problems related to the soil, their nurseries and insect and pest attacks, as well as water scarcity.

To help them, we downloaded about 30 videos from Access Agriculture and other websites. We also got some videos on health issues such as cholera, and tuberculosis.

We then started organising what we needed for the public video viewings in the villages of Natitingou. We rent a video projector for 10 US dollars a day; we rent an entire sound system (microphone, loudspeaker)

for about 15 dollars a day; we use our own laptop computer; and we rent a generator with fuel for about 15 dollars a day.

For one public viewing, we spend about \$45, including travel and transportation expenses. This expense prevents us from visiting a village many times. We are requesting funding from international partners from our network to support our video projection work.

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**To help them, we downloaded about 30 videos from Access Agriculture and other websites. We also got some videos on health issues such as cholera, and tuberculosis.**

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In one village close to Yetapo Natitingou, a big crowd of people gathered around the projection site. During the public viewing, we noticed that some of the participants caused a lot of noisy chatter and people would laugh because of certain questions that were asked. In Benin we speak many languages. Some villages even have speakers of three or four different languages.

During our evaluation of the session, we observed that several farmers at the edge of the crowd were not able to understand what was being said and





*Vegetable growing is a hot topic for young farmers.*

therefore would not be able to practise the techniques shown on screen.

After that, we decided to work directly with farmers through their associations, which are groups of 15 to 20 farmers. We directly work with them after showing each video. We also include one or two videos on health issues relevant to the area. The farmers like the video screenings, which are also a chance for us to chat with the villagers and to get to know them.

One evening, we organised a video viewing for youth at the Agricultural High School of Natitingou. Because they have access to electricity, we did not use the generator. At one point, when all the participants were focused on watching the video, there was suddenly a power cut. Despite this cut, we could continue with the projection using our battery-powered laptop.

As a youth organisation with little money for renting projection equipment, using a laptop turned out to be effective. The rural population was also satisfied with it. The laptop has allowed us to show videos in many more villages in the municipality of Natitingou. But we still need funding to subsidise our visits to the farmers for video projections.

By using a laptop, we have increased our projections from five to ten per month and can return to the same village to explain the content and to repeat the projection. In villages which have access to electricity, we sell them the DVD with 10 videos for the bargain price of 1 dollar.



*It is now possible to watch videos even without electricity.*

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**The laptop has allowed us to show videos in many more villages in the municipality of Natitingou. But we still need funding to subsidise our visits to the farmers for video projections.**

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Translation is often a challenge. Some of the languages in our area are spoken by just a few communities. For some of these languages we have no videos at all. We have to show the videos in French and translate them ourselves, simultaneously. Sometimes the translator misses important details and changes the meaning of the message.

We have challenges, such as the lack of electricity, and language barriers. But we are working things out. We are learning by our experience. Farmers sometimes learn from accidents. Advisory service providers, like us, also learn from serendipity. When forced to suddenly find an alternative to the electrical grid, we realized that we could show videos using our laptop.

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## DEEJAYING ON THE FARM

Ronald Kondwani Udedi

Once upon a time the rat went to seek advice from the chicken, the goat and the cow on how to avoid the trap which was set up in the house by the woman. They all told him: “That’s your problem – deal with it yourself”. But when the woman died from the wounds which were inflicted by the snake that was caught in the trap, it was the chicken, the goat and the cow that were slaughtered to feed the mourners. The rat then concluded: “I guess the trap was not meant for me”.

When farmers go searching for quality information it is often a bit like asking the chicken, the goat and the cow for help. In 2008, when I started to go out to villages in Malawi with a mobile video van to screen agricultural videos, I noticed how hungry farmers were for information. It was exciting to watch them get new knowledge, although it was not always possible to show the videos at the right time of the year.

Some explained to us that they wanted to refresh what they had learned when they were working on the activity featured in the video.

Unfortunately, I could not leave the DVDs behind. Even if I could have, the farmers did not have the equipment to view them. As a video team, we thought that if farmers could not remember what they watched, that was their problem. We were not unsympathetic but there was little else we could do for them.

As time went by, I noticed that the agricultural videos were not becoming as popular as I had expected. Many organisations turned to radio to disseminate messages. They thought it was a waste of resources to invest in making videos, and that posters were good enough for farmers. Eventually, my video team was disbanded.

This was a big disappointment and not what we had expected. How could things have gone wrong given the early enthusiasm of farmers? We loved our video van but apparently it wasn’t enough. Maybe we needed to think about new ways to make sure that farmers got their own copies of agricultural videos.

But by the end of 2011 other changes were happening. Computers had become cheaper and many people could afford to buy second-hand computers. Village youth started to get some bright ideas. Teenagers and twenty-somethings who could borrow a couple of hundred dollars (often from an older brother) began to open what they called “burning centres” which were often nothing more than a PC on a table in a small room.

The young men (and nearly all of them are men) proudly called themselves “DJs”. They attracted new customers, villagers who were eager to get Malawian music videos, and movies from Hollywood, Bollywood and even Nollywood. For a few coins, the customers can get their flash discs, or the memory cards of their



*A new business emerges in Malawi, uploading entertainment videos for villagers on their cell phones.*

cell phones filled up with films to watch at home, in cities and in rural areas.

At the same time, mobile phones have dramatically dropped in price. There has been an influx of cheap GSM phones from China. These have basic internet access and a memory card slot, so they can play back audio and 3gp videos offline. This is good enough for the latest films, music and any video, in fact. What this means is that rural farmers can now watch films together. The phone may have a small screen, but this is a big improvement on what was previously available to them: nothing.

These possibilities are opening up new business innovations. Two years ago, I started wondering whether mobile phones could be used to distribute agricultural videos. With the support of Access Agriculture, I went around the burning centres with my colleague Jeff Bentley to explore the possibilities.

The DJs can go to the nearest town or city to get the entertainment films, or the DJs can stay home and get films from friends or travelling sales people. The DJs buy a DVD and “rip” it (which means that they copy the files onto their hard-drive, where they can be copied for customers).

The DJs had mixed reactions to our visit. A few were not sure if their audience wanted agricultural videos. After all, the youngsters only had experience selling movies and Malawian music videos. But most of the DJs thought that their customers would like the learning videos.

To set the idea in motion, we gave 37 Access Agriculture videos in Chichewa to DJs, for free. Since then, some

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**There has been an influx of cheap GSM phones from China. These have basic internet access and a memory card slot , so they can play back audio and 3gp videos offline.**

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of the DJs have been phoning me to ask for new titles. I keep telling them that as soon as we have translated new videos I will let them know.

Earlier in 2015 I went to enlist new DJs and to distribute more videos. The DJs I met in 2014 were excited to share their stories about how farmers have used the videos.

Today there are 96 DJs in Malawi distributing videos on rice, chilli and how to fight Striga. Each DJ was given 15 DVDs. They can copy the DVDs or convert them to 3gp format (for viewing on cell phones). I asked the DJs to write down the details of the agricultural video clients. With this information, I would like to track the number of farmers who obtain the 3gp videos.

With a cheap \$10 GSM phone that has a micro SD card, farmers can buy agricultural videos in 3gp format from the DJs for as little as 5 cents. During the evening they can sit around as a family and watch these videos. This has also allowed farmers to re-watch the videos at the proper season of the agricultural calendar.

As someone who believes in knowledge management, I am continuously researching how people can find the right information, at the right time and in the right format. I came across the website freebasics.com, an initiative by Facebook to provide free internet on mobile phones. It is working hand-in-hand with Malawi’s two major mobile operators TNM and Airtel. I can foresee DJs downloading these videos onto their cell phones directly from the AA website and selling them to farmers.

We are all in this world together, and the farmers’ poverty is our problem too. We can be foolish like the chicken, the goat and the cow, or we can all find ways to share our ideas.

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## YOU WANT TO FILM ME? GIVE ME MONEY!

Gilbert Dembélé

In 2014, I decided to make a video on cowpea thrips. Thrips are the first insects that attack cowpeas at the flowering stage.

I started my literature review and proceeded to choose my site and the farmers that might help me to produce the video. I chose a village in the region of Ségou in Mali, where farmers were working with an agricultural research station on cowpea production.

These farmers are major cowpea producers and they are known for having problems with thrips. After identifying the village, I went there for a first contact visit and to discuss my purpose with researchers and farmers.



*Most farmers are happy to share their experiences without being paid.*

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**After the usual traditional greetings, I asked to start the filming. However, the farmer asked me, “How much are you paying me?”**

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I explained to them that I wished to develop and produce a farmer-to-farmer training video.

They agreed to work with me to produce the video. I then started meeting with them to be able to write the technical details of the video script. This allowed me to progress greatly in setting the scenes.

I decided that two scenes are essential to this subject: the first dealt with the use of chemical pesticides and the second with the use of non-chemical pesticides such as neem and ash.

Having finalised the two scenes, I planned the filming with the farmers. The shots on using chemical pesticides took place without problems. However, filming the non-chemical pesticides was another story altogether.

After having travelled 170 km, I arrived for the second shooting at the appointed hour with my driver, my assistant and all my equipment.

After the usual traditional greetings, I asked to start the filming. However, the farmer asked me, “How much are you paying me?”



*Farmers can have unrealistic expectations about appearing in a video.*

Puzzled, I tried to repeat the context and purpose of this video, and provided all the explanations I had given at our first encounter. For example, I explained that I am working for a development NGO and that the videos will be used to train other farmers who do not know the technology yet.

Despite all my explanations, he refused to be filmed without being paid. The farmer replied that he understood our intentions very well. However, he stated that his image is not free because an image is very expensive.

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**I explained that I am working for a development NGO and that the videos will be used to train other farmers who do not know the technology yet.**

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I was shocked by his answer, and he told me that a few months earlier, the village farmers had organised a major event at which they invited national television to cover it. The filming and broadcasting of this event cost the farmers about 500,000 CFA francs (about \$820). He added: "I'll do whatever you want me to do in the film, but you will have to pay me at least 300,000 CFA (\$490)."

Despite all of my efforts, it was not possible to find a friendly solution and I was obliged to return without shooting. Since it would take too long to organise other producers to take his place before the winter arrived, the shooting of the video had to be suspended until next season.

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**Despite all of my efforts, it was not possible to find a friendly solution and I was obliged to return without shooting.**

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I probably could have avoided this uncomfortable situation had I given the producer a farmer-to-farmer training DVD at the beginning of our contact to trigger his interest.

Another idea is to involve competent village authorities, and to explain at the beginning that we are not able to pay the farmers we film.

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## EARNING MONEY FROM WEEDS

Samuel Guindo

**S**triga is a nasty, parasitic weed that sucks the life out of cereal crops. Farmers in Mali had no idea how to control it, and often watched helplessly as it destroyed their millet and sorghum crops.

That began to change in 2012 when farmers all over Mali began to watch ten farmer-to-farmer videos on how to fight Striga.

Striga biology is unusual. The plant germinates and attaches itself to the roots of the cereal crop. The Striga grows underground for a long time.

After the farmers have finished weeding their crop, the Striga suddenly appears. Its seeds are so small that most people never notice them.

After they watched the videos in 2012, farmers in Mali understood that key to controlling Striga is to hand pull each of the flowering plants, before it sets seed. This is best handled by the whole community.

After watching the videos, farmers from the Tominian Circle Farmers' Union (UACT) in the Ségou region of Mali decided to implement a community day for uprooting Striga while it was flowering.

On this special day, the whole community comes together to go through the whole village to uproot the Striga.

The day is organised each year between September and October, when all the farmers are at home waiting for the next harvest. Each village times their community day to fall when the Striga is in flower.

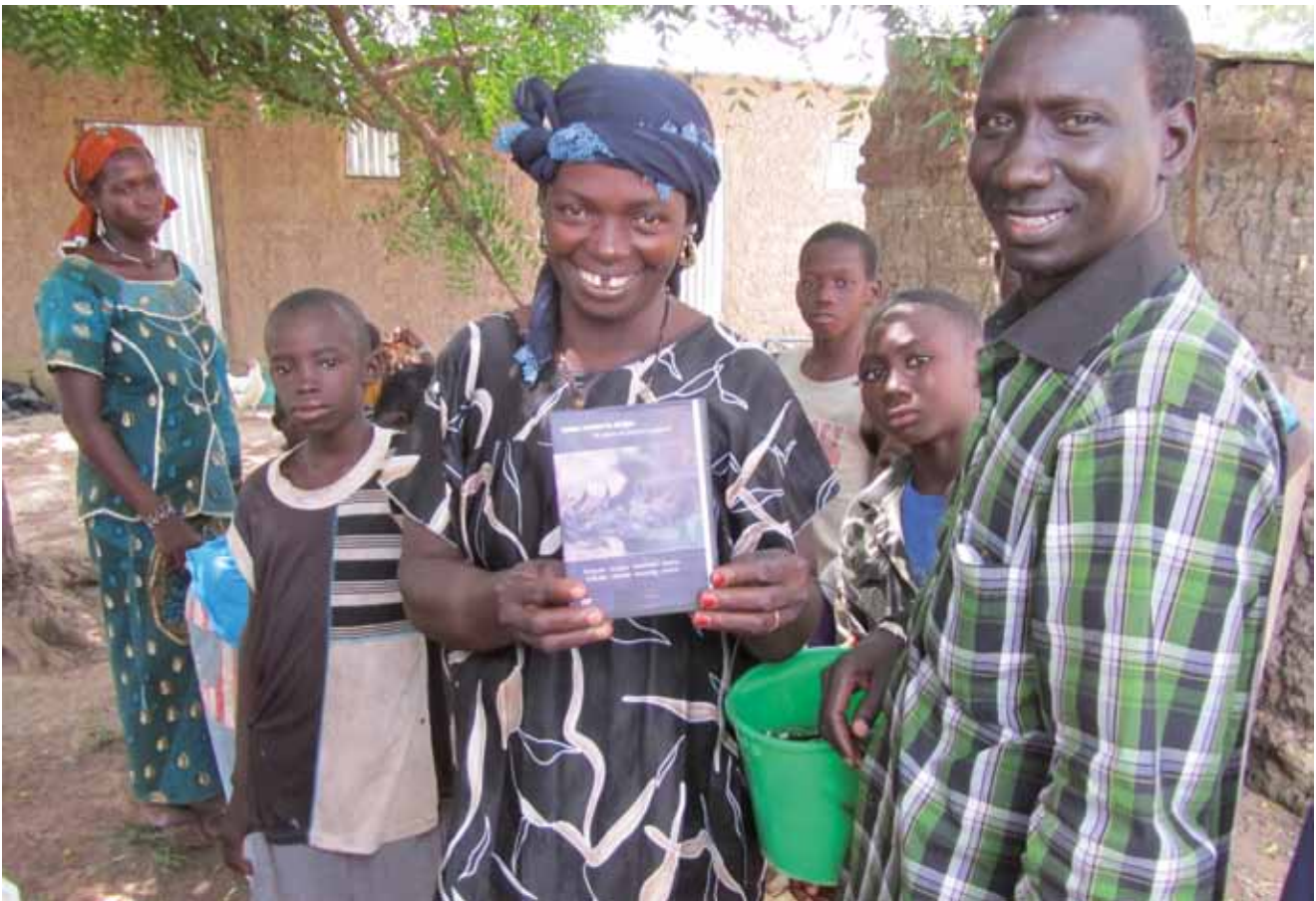
Uprooting Striga has become a very popular and well appreciated activity wherever the Tominian farmers' union has promoted the videos.

One group of women in the north-eastern village of Daga have their own story. Despite efforts to combat Striga, the farmers were not yet managing it.



*At work uprooting Striga.*





Women are often able to profit from a DVD.

To limit the damage caused by Striga, the women of Daga organised themselves into a group to sell their services to pull the Striga from farmers' fields.

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**After they watched the videos in 2012, farmers in Mali understood that key to controlling Striga is to hand pull each of the flowering plants, before it sets seed.**

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Called the "Striga Uprooting Group", their main activity is to uproot striga. All village women participate in this service provider group whose work has become a new income-generating activity for them. At the time of flowering and when their services are requested by farmers, the group passes through their fields to uproot the weed for a sum of between 2,500 to 5,000 CFA (\$4 to \$8) per hectare depending on how badly the field is infested.

Almost 2 years after viewing the videos, this group's Striga uprooting services remain in high demand.

As witnessed by the president of the group: "We are unable to satisfy all the demands of the village. We earn good money by uprooting Striga. The money we gain has helped to pay for school books and pens for our children. Uprooting Striga is our own business and provides our women's group with a source of income."

Videos not only help rural people to try technical innovations, but social innovations as well.

The Striga videos were not intended to inspire women to organise themselves into money-making groups. But the videos do show people working in groups to pull Striga up by the roots. The women in Daga simply applied this new idea creatively to start a new social group.

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## GIVING BIRTH IS THE EASY PART

Ahmad Salahuddin

Like many other innovations in the area of development, Bangladesh gave birth to a new way of making learning videos.

In these rice videos, women from Maria village in Bogra, northwest Bangladesh, showed their improved practices of seed cleaning, processing and storage.

In 2002–2004 extension agents, media, project and programme implementers showed interest in using the videos when they were made available by the project (PETRRR – Poverty Elimination through Rice Research Assistance), which I helped to manage.



Storing rice seed in a pot, with neem leaves. Similar innovations have been shared across Africa on video.

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The insights gained from this cross-continental experience of sharing videos later contributed to the creation of Access Agriculture, a global platform for sharing agricultural videos in many languages.

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Initially, the project partners were enthusiastic about using these videos. IRRI translated them for use in other countries (India, Philippines). CABI helped to disseminate the videos in many villages of Bangladesh.

Another partner, RDA, experimented with video production on other crops and with women farmers, and also disseminated these videos with the aid of TV and print media. Policy makers in Bangladesh also thought that video had potential to be mainstreamed within the extension system.

However, it is now clear that this enthusiasm rested only with individual champions and did not spread into their wider organisations. The initial enthusiasm could have led to an effective new way of reaching many farmers with quality information, but the momentum of progress failed in Bangladesh.

Outside Bangladesh, however, the momentum did continue. The video production leader, Dr Paul Van Mele, brought the idea with him when he moved from Bangladesh to the Africa Rice Center in Benin. There,





*Bangladeshi video experiences laid the foundation for the Access Agriculture approach.*

he had the Bangladeshi seed videos translated into various African languages.

The insights gained from this cross-continental experience of sharing videos later contributed to the creation of Access Agriculture, a global platform for sharing agricultural videos in many languages.

Giving birth to global video innovation was the easy part for Bangladesh. But clearly more effort was needed to sustain the approach in this country. Institutes that were involved in the research could have developed a protocol for sharing the videos widely with farmers.

The government could have made a policy, for example, in which every scientific innovation coming from the research system would automatically have a farmer-led video attached to its fact sheets. Extension policy makers could then have transformed video into a major tool to reach thousands of farmers that cannot be reached through other means.

National media could have made use of these videos by transmitting them during appropriate seasons. In the current vacuum of lack of national strategy, videos remain under-utilised.

Many NGOs claiming to be the leading development agencies in the field of agriculture, do not consider video as a strategic tool for development. However,

agricultural projects and programmes are producing many new project-promoting videos and spending a lot of money. It is also much more expensive to make a new video than to translate one, yet many actors fail to see the value of translating videos made by others, such as the ones hosted on the Access Agriculture website.

As a project management member following the developments in Bangladesh over the last 15 years, it has been frustrating for me to see the non-actions and lack of progress in my country while the idea of farmer-to-farmer videos has gone much further across Africa.

It is time to understand why it did not work in Bangladesh and to think how potential actors could play roles to adopt a strong video-led extension approach.

The good news is that Access Agriculture has decided to work on this in Bangladesh in the coming years. I decided to join the team and to contribute to helping the birthplace of these videos make up for lost time.

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## MAKING FARMING SEXY

Léonce Sessou

I am always happy whenever I come out of a video session,” says Raymond, a 24-year old student at Songhai Centre, in Benin.

Raymond is the kind of young farmer that Benin and Africa desperately need, to renew an ageing farm population and to bring new ideas into agriculture. He is one of 650 students studying agribusiness at the centre. Video sessions provide Raymond and his friends with new knowledge and skills. More than that, they are developing their passion for agriculture. Farming has become sexy again for youth.

The Songhai Centre promotes environmentally friendly farming, renewable energy and agricultural services. Songhai finds ways to make better use of resources, through its integrated agriculture and waste-recycling system. Songhai strives to involve more young people in agriculture. Many are leaving rural areas, seeking jobs in cities because they think that farmers work too hard, use outmoded tools, and earn too little.

Songhai’s training programmes promote technologies on soil fertilisation, mulching, irrigation, integrated pest management, food processing, and others that make agriculture more attractive to them. The training helps farmers to produce more with less, using local resources to produce goods and services for the rural communities. But to achieve this, the farmers of

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Raymond is the kind of young farmer that Benin and Africa desperately need, to renew an ageing farm population and to bring new ideas into agriculture. He is one of 650 students studying agribusiness at the centre.

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*Songhai thinks that farming should be interesting, profitable, and environmentally sound.*



*Youth will stay in agriculture if they can make some money from farming. Songhai shows Access Agriculture training videos once a week.*

tomorrow need to have good practical and business skills.

Videos capture the attention of student farmers. This is why we embed video sessions within the training at Songhai. Videos produced by Songhai and its partners, such as Access Agriculture, are downloaded and shown to the students twice a week. The videos show many different practices – from drip irrigation, to feeding snails, post-harvest, rice parboiling, and animal husbandry.

Every quarter, the centre’s communication team suggests a list of videos to the training department based on the curricula being developed. Trainers watch the videos before the sessions so that they can guide the learning process. After the students watch the videos, the trainer adds more information and responds to questions. The videos are entertaining and capture the attention of the students. The courses last 3 to 18 months, and at the end students are keen to return home and start applying what they’ve learned.

Raymond says that farming is becoming more attractive to youth. Videos play an important role in energising this new generation of entrepreneurs.

Videos make learning more entertaining. Students see profitable agricultural enterprises, while watching farmers apply best practices.

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**The videos are entertaining and capture the attention of the students. The courses last 3 to 18 months, and at the end students are keen to return home and start applying what they’ve learned.**

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Many farmers are leaving the land but new, young, fresh recruits are getting ready to take their places. Videos are helping the digital generation to see the fun and profitable side of farming.

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## CRAZY ABOUT THE NEW CHEESE

Bio Ganni Kirabe Allou • Mori Gouroubera

Women in the village of Badékparou in Tchaourou municipality in Benin were starting to make money by turning soy beans into cheese (actually tofu). But the cheese was not yet reaching a high quality standard because of the processing techniques used by the women.

To improve the quality, a video on processing soya cheese was presented in collaboration with DEDRAS NGO through video projections in Badékparou.

The women organised themselves into three small groups of about 10 people each to watch the 9-minute video. Three months after the women watched the video, we talked to them again.

The women loved the video. First, they emphasised that most of the conventional training they received before the video training excluded some of the group's members.

Sometimes trainers only teach group leaders. These leaders were in charge of passing on the ideas from the training modules to the other members. But repeating someone else's lesson can be frustrating, and the second-hand information was not always passed on completely.

Gounou Baké, a member of the group, said that such a training approach does not personally motivate her to learn more. She always had doubts about whether the training information passed on to them was accurate.

In contrast, she was satisfied with the video-based training by DEDRAS because it allowed for all the members to watch and to learn together about the various stages of making cheese from soya.

Thanks to the video, the group not only heard, but could also see the techniques for soya cheese-making. Inspired by the images, the women adapted some of the equipment shown, such as strainers, to give their soya cheeses a shape similar to cow's milk cheese.

One woman said that the customers not only appreciated the new shape of their cheese, but also liked it because it was no longer repulsive.

By applying the processing techniques seen in the video, they could now produce soya cheeses without the bad odour that their cheeses had before. Better tofu attracts more customers.

These women explained that they are now using improved techniques which they learned from the video, and that their neighbours who did not watch the video were curious and wanted to understand how they managed to improve the quality of their cheese so much that their consumers were crazy about it.

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## BECOMING A JOURNALIST FARMER

Alcide Agbangla

Ever since I started making farmer-to-farmer videos, my career has taken a new and interesting direction. I am gradually becoming a farmer.

Making a video requires a lot of work before the end product is ready for an audience. From the conception stage to the end product, I have to go through several steps, some more complex than others. Before making a video, I need to collect a lot of information on the topic.

As I collect this information I learn a lot and I ask many questions.

For example, while making a video on rabbits, I learned that to breed the bunnies, one has to know when the does are in heat.

The female's vulva changes colour to indicate that she will accept a male. But rabbits are delicate, and handling the animals to check out their colour can harm the rabbits. I know a lot about raising and selling rabbits for profit now, because of the research I did to produce my videos.

I still remember one film shoot in the last quarter of 2013 on the cassava mosaic virus at a farm in Gankpétin, in the centre of Benin. I was a bit surprised to realise that after 40 years' experience in growing cassava, farmer Firmin Atchède saw the disease symptoms without realising that it was cassava mosaic virus.

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As I collect information I learn a lot and I ask many questions. For example, while making a video on rabbits, I learned that to breed the bunnies, one has to know when the does are in heat.

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While doing the shots and discussing cassava, he managed to better understand this deadly crop disease. I would not have been able to enlighten him if I had not informed myself about cassava virus from researchers and specialised technicians before making the video.



*Making agricultural videos is such a powerful experience that Alcide (right) is gradually becoming a farmer himself.*



*Making videos has taught me a lot about agriculture, enough to start my own enterprise.*

When I am developing a video, my questions do not dry up until I understand the topic completely. This is a wonderful school that I am attending!

Not as the student of many years ago who would have to sit down every morning and evening in a classroom to learn, but rather by going from farm to farm, from livestock keeper to livestock keeper, and so on.

Today, thanks to all that I learned during my research, I can direct and advise my friend Michael who has just started rabbit farming, so that he can succeed and obtain better results.

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**When I am developing a video, my questions do not dry up until I understand the topic completely. This is a wonderful school that I am attending!**

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Once a video is produced, I include it in the collection of training videos, along with those available on the Access Agriculture platform. These are shown at the centre where I work. Songhai. I also learn from watching these videos.

All of these exercises in agriculture are turning me into a small-scale farmer, an agricultural entrepreneur. With the knowledge and the experience that I have acquired, today I am able to start a small farming initiative.

I helped my friend Michael with some information he needed, and he was kind enough to include me in his rabbit farming project, in which I invested some of my money. Now I am dreaming of the day when I will start my own farm.

I do not claim to have become a farmer yet, but I have started to plough my own furrows, so to speak, even though I am still a journalist.

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## FARMERS GET ORGANISED TO WATCH VIDEOS

Souradjou Fayçal Adenidji • Charlot Eriola Marius

Videos do more than encourage farmers to try new agricultural techniques. If the videos are good enough, and relevant enough, they may inspire farmers to organise themselves to watch the videos, overcoming the lack of TVs, DVD players and electricity.

In 2007, videos on rice transplanting were shown to Houéda farmers in southern Benin, to help train them to improve their yields.

Not having all the equipment needed to project these videos, the farmers began to organise themselves into small groups by district, so they could watch the videos.

The rice growers gathered around those who had video-watching equipment. They all contributed to buying the fuel to power the generator. At first, only men attended, but they would go home and tell their wives about the video.

Because they could not go to other households nor join the men's groups, the women also started a group. The group acquired the necessary equipment, such as a second-hand generator, a DVD player, and a television set.

They elected a leader who kept the equipment. For every video session, the women helped pay for the fuel for the generator. At first the women's group only

had eight members, but at later sessions many more women from various households gathered.

Before and during every agricultural season, men and women now find themselves once again in their groups, to watch and discuss the rice videos. This allows the groups to share their experiences, and to discuss the challenges they face as they improve their yields, and in so doing, their standard of living.

In some districts, the introduction of videos also enabled the birth of video clubs for youth, a projection centre by a farmers' organisation offering video services, and the creation of women's groups.

The activity of showing videos has brought about a lot more than the dissemination of new knowledge into the communities of southern Benin.

It has stimulated farmers to organise themselves into (men's, women's and youth) groups to be able to share experiences, change practices, increase production yields, and as a result improve their living conditions.

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## TIME AND PLACE

Gabriel Karubanga

Farmers are as sensitive as anyone else to their setting and time of day. Where, when and how people watch a video influences how well they learn. In August 2015, I went with Emmanuel Aliguma to ask 48 rice farmers what they had learned from video shows, as part of my Ph.D. research in seven villages in Kamwenge district, Uganda.

In 2000, farmers in Kamwenge district did not know much about rice farming. They were used to seeing rice served on plates at funerals, weddings and introduction ceremonies.

They thought it was food for white, Indian and rich people. They enjoyed eating rice but did not know how to grow it. Even those that grew rice on a small scale did not know the best practices for growing it. They broadcast it or dug planting holes, rather than growing rice in lines, for example.

Then in 2006, an NGO (SG 2000) introduced rice videos, and farmers were mobilised to watch them at the Mahyoro Rice Farmers' Association hall every Friday from 7:00 to 10:00 PM.

The timing was chosen because it is when people are home from work, and the darkness allowed for clearer viewing. Men attended the video screening because they were free to move at night, unlike women. For those living close by, it was a time to see their friends, drink and play chess or pool. But farmers from further away would hurry home after viewing the videos.

The videos were in English, and they showed all the steps involved in rice growing, from land preparation to harvesting.

It took the farmers about 2–3 hours to watch all 10 videos and discuss them. The farmers were free to attend and watch the videos as often as they wished. Those willing and who had time to attend would come back the following Friday to view the same videos.

We were surprised when one of the female farmers in Kyendangara village told us: “Learning through videos does not occur while in the video hall, but occurs outside when farmers can discuss, reflect and share experiences to practise what is being screened”.



Many rural telecentre initiatives failed because they lacked content for farmers.



*In Uganda some kibandas or video shacks have started showing farmer training videos, not just football games.*

Others added that during the video show, more entertainment takes place and less learning. The farmers were watching the attractive pictures, but not learning much. This was partly because the videos were shown so late at night, when the farmers were too tired to pay attention.

Farmers told us that showing videos in their local language, particularly, Rukiga and Runyankole would have increased their understanding.

This taught us a lesson that this group of farmers wanted to start earlier in the day. This allowed them time to discuss and reflect on what was being viewed in the video, and to retain more information and learn more.

Farmers were mobilised into groups in their respective villages. The videos triggered the farmers to establish demonstration sites based on the new practices they learned about in the videos. For instance, each group compared the yields of broadcast rice with rice planted in lines.

Farmers met weekly in these fields to discuss more complex information/practices they did not understand, reflect and share experiences about what

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**The videos triggered the farmers to establish demonstration sites based on the new practices they learned about in the videos.**

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**“Learning through videos does not occur while in the video hall, but occurs outside when farmers can discuss, reflect and share experiences to practise what is being screened”.**

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was happening on the demonstration site relating it with what was seen in the video.

At these demonstration sites, they were able to speak the local language everyone understood. They even translated the key messages from the videos into local songs and drama. On field days, farmers were given an opportunity to watch the videos and later sing the songs.

Watching the videos as an organised group, earlier in the day, as part of a formal farmer-experimenter format helped the farmers to better understand the English in the videos. They also enabled farmers to share the information with others. Even those that never attended the video shows came to learn.

Everyone learns from experience. After this study was completed, the rice videos were translated into five of the major languages of Uganda, including Runyankole, and 7500 copies of the DVD were distributed around the country.

When there is no local language version, farmers can add their own creative ways of understanding the information, such as doing experiments, composing songs and discussing the videos among themselves.

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## VIDEOS ON THE RADIO

Phillip Chinkhokwe

**F**arm Radio Trust in Malawi is a champion of radio for agricultural extension. Established in 2009 after a research project by Farm Radio International, Farm Radio Trust is an independent NGO. FRT uses radio and other information and communications technologies (ICTs) to increase smallholder farmers' access to agricultural information.

Farm Radio Trust reaches out to thousands of rural farmers in Malawi through weekly radio broadcasts on partner radio stations (national, community and private stations), sharing stories about farming. Farmers like radio because it makes education locally available to them.

Farmers in Malawi face challenges ranging from food shortages to climate change. It is hard to get information because there are few extension workers. Newspapers and internet are penetrating rural communities, but slowly, because few villagers can read. If farmers have no extension agent and cannot read, they can still get agricultural information on the radio.

Farm Radio Trust helps broadcasters to design and produce radio broadcasts that meet farmers' needs. But making new content is difficult and takes time. Under-staffed rural radio stations struggle to make a lively radio programme based on a written script, if that is the only aid at hand.

Constant thought and innovation in agricultural radio programming is required to maintain quality radio

programmes and a loyal audience. So Farm Radio trains broadcasters to combine radio with other interactive ICT platforms, such as mobile phones and farmer-training videos.

With Access Agriculture, agricultural videos are gradually becoming available in Malawi. Farm Radio Trust distributes videos in DVD packs for free to smallholder farmers, and through its partner radios. However, the challenge for farmers is to find a way to watch the videos with no TV, DVD players, or electricity. A few people who do own the right equipment have established video show rooms as businesses.

In 2015, Farm Radio Trust therefore saw an opportunity to raise awareness on farmer-to-farmer videos from Access Agriculture. Through the project, Scaling up Radio and ICT in Enhancing Extension Delivery (SRIEED), funded by the government of Flanders, Farm Radio Trust turned existing radio-listening clubs into video-viewing clubs and information hubs, where farmers can meet regularly to discuss and share ideas about farming.

A hub comprises at least 10 members and is coordinated by a community radio station. Farm Radio Trust has supported and trained the farmers to use digital equipment such as solar radios, MP3 voice recorders and smart phones to enable them to access information from a variety of platforms. The smart phones used by the farmers' hubs had





*Rural radio broadcasters learn from training videos to make interesting radio programmes.*

pre-loaded farmer training videos in Chichewa from Access Agriculture.

Ten out of the 60 hubs across seven districts have received smart phones with training videos uploaded. With the help of community radio staff, Farm Radio facilitated briefing sessions with extension workers and farmer representatives to show them how to use the devices.

During the briefings, training videos were shown to the farmers to give them the chance to give feedback on them. Farmers were compelled by seeing fellow farmers in the videos narrating their stories of success in farming.

Farmers welcomed the development of video as a new mode of receiving extension apart from using radio. “I have always expected agricultural extension officers to be experts in all my farming activities, but it is not possible. Now with a video I think I can learn more on my own”, said Master Englesi during the training video briefing in Mangochi.

Radio stations have helped promote the distribution of videos on DVDs as well as encouraging farmers to watch and share them with others through mobile phones.

Nkhotakota Community Radio Station also makes a link between radio and video programmes. Presenters carry out research by visiting farmers and asking them what they want to hear on the radio. They then show the farmers a training video to put them at ease before interviewing them on the topic.

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If a relevant video already exists in Chichewa, the audio track of the video is then combined with feedback from the farmers in the field to make an appealing radio programme.

With such knowledge on information needs, broadcasters help decide which videos should be given to a specific group depending on farming practices. They also use the voices extracted from farmer videos or downloaded from the Access Agriculture website and include them in their programmes to promote the videos.

They also direct farmers to where they can access the DVDs especially by sharing the locations of farmers’ hubs. The radio station monitors how farmers use and benefit from the training videos.

Radio creates imagination, but words and pictures combined build a lasting memory.

Matilda Gwetsa is the lead farmer in Chipwatu Listener Club and she safeguards the radio and mobile phone handed to the hub by Farm Radio Trust. “Videos have a long-lasting impact in my mind because I can hear and see how it is done and thereafter try it on my own,” she says.

Gwetsa facilitates discussions among the group, where the farmers learn how to put the messages accessed through radio broadcasts and videos into practice.

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## SMALLHOLDERS ORGANISED NATIONWIDE, USING VIDEOS

Fatuma A. Nyanjong

Information is power. As such, access to information helps farmers to make wise decisions to enhance food security and improve livelihoods.

Unfortunately, in the recent past, agricultural extension has performed poorly. Institutions, governments and NGOs have tried to fill this gap and reach farmers with extension information through projects and programmes but also with limited success.

The Kenya National Farmers Federation (KENAFF) is a national farmers' organisation covering the whole country. KENAFF is the umbrella organisation of farmers groups, representing the interests of about 2.1 million farm families in Kenya.



Women especially like videos on small livestock.

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**“I showed them a video on poultry management. Most of them liked the video and asked where they could get the video to watch later.”**

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KENAFF was established in 1946 as a Farmers' Union representing the exclusive interests of large-scale white farmers, but later evolved from a farmers' union to a federation of agricultural producers and in November 2003 became the National Farmer Federation. KENAFF is a non-political, non-commercial, democratic federation of Kenyan farmers, operating through networks of farmers and like-minded institutions.

The Federation is a partner to Access Agriculture in producing and distributing agricultural videos for smallholder farmers.

KENAFF has various platforms and distribution channels for sharing and gathering demands for agricultural videos from Access Agriculture. The platforms go from the national level to the most local level of government.

KENAFF staff have shared videos with the farmers during training sessions at the county levels and through its media page and website. This has made farmers and other stakeholders aware of the agricultural videos and helped in the distribution.



While digital technology gets cheaper and more common, if people are going to watch the videos, the content must still be relevant, and of high quality.

For example, while I was training farmers who are poultry cooperative board members in Siaya County on cooperative management, I showed them a video on poultry management. Most of them liked the video and asked where they could get the video to watch later.

KENAFF has invested in a TV station that will share the videos hosted on the Access Agriculture website with the farmers, and show them the link to the website so farmers can browse themselves for topics of relevance to them. The TV station is targeting all farmers and agricultural stakeholders along value chains in Kenya, so it will be a great platform to share experiences and follow up with the farmers who watch the TV programmes.

This is an opportunity to create demands for videos, to share the videos and lessons learned from those who have watched the videos as the TV station will have designated time to air the agricultural videos.

We cannot do everything on our own. In view of this, we need to work with other partners for video distribution.

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**KENAFF has invested in a TV station that will share the videos hosted on the Access Agriculture website with the farmers, and show them the link to the website so farmers can browse themselves for topics of relevance to them.**

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KENAFF works with smallholder farmers in groups, so it may be important to form video-viewing clubs within the groups to share information and to see how the groups use their new knowledge.

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To view and freely download farmer training videos, visit  
[www.accessagriculture.org](http://www.accessagriculture.org)





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