
EXPERIENCE CAPITALIZATION TO SCALE UP INNOVATIONS AND GOOD PRACTICES IN MALI

Modibo Coulibaly



The Forum des Services de Conseil Agricole et Rural du Mali (FOSCAR-Mali) has adopted the experience capitalization approach, linking it to the production of radio programmes and videos. Produced in a participatory manner, these involve various stakeholders linked to the rice value chains.

Cover FOSCAR-Mali has been selected as an operator to support the capitalization of the IFAD programme in Mali

FOSCAR-Mali is a national platform for Malian organisations, and is part of the Network of West and Central African Agricultural and Rural Advisory Services, the African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (AFAAS) and the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS). Formed in 2015, it has since stepped up its interventions to help restructure the existing agricultural extension and advisory services through the promotion of good agricultural practices and innovation. Since 2018, FOscAR-Mali has also adopted the experience capitalization approach to enhance its capacity to document innovative agricultural advisory and extension strategies, practices and experiences.

The network has more than 200 registered members representing civil society organisations, producer organisations and NGOs. It seeks to harmonise and improve their collaboration strategies in order to meet the challenges which face the agricultural and rural sector in Mali, such as low productivity and poor extension services. Its objectives are, among others, to support the development of a more sustainable and modern agricultural sector; put in place mechanisms for sharing knowledge and reaching a large number of farmers; and to promote new approaches, such as innovation platforms and the use of ICTs.

FOscAR-Mali has started several projects developing innovative approaches to enhance extension and the provision of agricultural advice to producers, inputs suppliers, and traders of agricultural products. One such innovation was the development of the Participative Media Campaign (CMPC), which combines radio, video, social networks and other ICTs, to disseminate project experiences. The organisation's Facebook page and WhatsApp groups, for example, were followed by the Green Farm Council WebRadio and WebTV. Since 2015, more than 3 million producers in the regions of Mopti, Koulikoro, Segou and Sikasso have benefited directly or indirectly. And as part of its different initiatives, the organisation is encouraging rural communities to participate in the analysis, management and evaluation of the existing agricultural advisory systems – and the selection of those best adapted to their needs – through 600 “Community Listening Clubs”, set-up between June and August 2018 in 10 project areas.

From Senegal to Mali

Starting in September 2017, CTA organised two training workshops in Dakar, focusing on the experience capitalization approach. I joined both meetings as the FOscAR-Mali focal point, together with many other “champions” from West and

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Central Africa. As part of the training course we had to select a specific experience and complete a capitalization process. I decided to look at the activities and results achieved by the Community Listening Clubs to improve agricultural advice through radio, especially in relation to the different innovations which were meant to strengthen the local value chains. The convincing results of this capitalization exercise encouraged FOSCAR-Mali and its strategic partners to adopt the experience capitalization approach, and to describe and analyse the different projects run by the organisation. We have started with one of these, running from 2017 to 2022: The use of Radio Broadcasts, Video and Community Listening Clubs in Disseminating Innovations on the Rice Value Chain in Mali.

Right after the second workshop, also held in Dakar in February 2018, I organised a meeting to share my impressions with eight members of the FOSCAR-Mali staff, and I described the importance of the approach and the steps needed to complete it. The team unanimously decided to integrate the approach into the implementation of CMPC, which began in

2018. The proposal to have experience capitalization as a key component of the CMPC project was validated by FOSCAR-Mali, but the other strategic partners, including the Green Innovation Centers (CIV) supported by the German GIZ, also had to approve this.

FOSCAR-Mali proposed to hold an experience capitalization workshop with CIV in May 2018 and use it to review the CMPC annual strategy. This grouped a total of 15 participants: 10 from CIV and five from FOSCAR-Mali. All of them agreed to start an experience capitalization process, with the following recommendations:

- FOSCAR-Mali will lead the capacity development activities for steps such as the development of the radio programmes, involving the regional directorates of agriculture, partner radio stations, the Community Listeners Clubs, farm input supply companies, and producer representatives;
- By organising four workshops with different stakeholders from the 10 project areas, FOSCAR-Mali and CIV will follow an experience capitalization process for writing articles in French and for recording audio testimonies from farmers;
- All partners, as part of the capitalization team, will take pictures and videos to relate their project experiences for sharing via WhatsApp, Facebook, or through the community of practice supported by CTA.

Left Videos help show the needs of the stakeholders involved

Below The proposal to have experience capitalization as a key component of the project was validated by all partners

Next page The ten multidisciplinary orientation teams organised different training workshops for the Community Listening Clubs

Results

The four orientation and planning workshops held by FOSCAR-Mali have brought together between 20 and 25 actors, and allowed the establishment of multidisciplinary teams for the systemic production of radio broadcasts as “capitalised experiences”. A radio programme model based on the project’s stories and experiences, was produced during each workshop.

The 10 multidisciplinary orientation teams, in turn, organised training workshops for the Community Listening Clubs, with representatives of the organisations which make the rice value chain. They have also been given the responsibility for setting up new groups, providing them with radio sets, and organising, preparing, broadcasting and monitoring the programmes, and collecting feedback and reporting this back to FOSCAR-Mali. Our task is then to analyse if the topics and content of each radio programme respect the strategic plan developed. As an example, at the suggestion of the groups in Npegnesso and Zoloko in the Sikasso area, the team asked FOSCAR-Mali for the distribution of videos presenting the System of Rice Intensification (SRI). The establishment of an SRI online group, the FOSCAR Facebook page and an SRI WhatsApp group, helped all stakeholders share their experiences and discuss the results of the radio broadcasts.

Audio and videos

FOSCAR-Mali produces participatory videos which show the needs of the stakeholders involved, as well as the progress of project interventions towards meeting these needs. Two videos produced showed the advantages of SRI; one, for example, focused on the experience of producer Sekou Coulibaly, president of the group in the Selingué area. Having adopted SRI, his field recovered after the 2018 flood, while his neighbours using conventional practices have lost everything.

“I am the president of the group in Selingué. Following the workshop organised in Baguinéda by FOSCAR-Mali and CIV, I have been working together with my radio programme production team. The team members appointed me president. The other members are two radio broadcasters from RadioBAYA, the CIV’s focal point rice specialist at the Selingué Rural Development Office. Depending on the agricultural calendar, we identify the subject, the stakeholders involved, and a village with an interesting experience to share. We agreed with RadioBAYA that the radio programme on the SRI techniques will be held each Friday. On the day of the show, we go to the village to generate the content with the farmers of the village in the field and at home. Personally, I communicate regularly by phone with the pilot producers in the Baguinéda area who are ahead of us in the practice of SRI. Sibiri Konaté, an SRI seed farmer from Baguinéda for instance, shares a lot of information with me by WhatsApp.”



In order to better develop the contents of all radio programmes, the production teams include men and women who attended the FOSCAR-Mali capacity development trainings. The programmes are produced in the local language selected by the farmers in the area. Before the production process actually starts, a draft table of contents is shared over the radio to encourage producers from neighbouring villages to join the process.

Each programme must have at least 50% of its content coming from the farmers themselves; 30% coming from the different extension agents, and not more than 10% presented by a radio journalist. This encourages all actors to share their knowledge and opinions, as well as the lessons learned in the field. By listening to the radio programmes, either on air or by using a flash drive during one of our meetings, farmers are able to learn from what others have done without having to organise field visits.

Sustaining and upscaling the process

One of the key decisions taken has been the creation of a system to cover all costs with individual contributions of 10 CFA francs per day (€0.015). This revolving fund is used to pay the radio station so that it will continue producing the agricultural advice programmes when the project ends. In this way, the farmers and the radios stations can set up their own experience capitalization processes.

FOSCAR-Mali has been selected as an operator to support the capitalization of the IFAD programme in Mali. In addition to this, FOSCAR-Mali is working on scaling up the institutionalization of the capitalization of rural experiences using participatory video, and through the training of several actors in experience capitalization techniques. This means that we will continue collaborating with CTA and with other “champions” and facilitators, and in this way learn from each other. We have to learn together and also share these lessons with others.



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