How can we ensure that international assistance reaches the people who need it most? And how can we include them in conversations about the decisions that affect them?

**It’s simple: We ask them.**

From May to July, the Canadian government issued a wide invitation to participate in its international assistance review consultations. We made our own submission, of course. But we also worked with Global Affairs Canada to use the most powerful technologies in rural Africa — radio and mobile phones — to find out what ordinary Tanzanian farmers had to say.

Over three weeks in June, we worked with two of Tanzania’s most popular radio stations to reach listeners in every corner of the country. We ran a special, four-episode radio show, each sharing a question with listeners. To respond they could place a free missed call, which would prompt a callback by Uliza, our polling tool, at no charge to them.

The response was overwhelming. **Nearly 3,000** Tanzanians made their voices heard through the poll. Simply by listening to voice prompts and voting with their keypad, any audience member could participate.

We even allowed callers to leave voice messages to be aired in a following episode.

We call this combination of special radio broadcasts and Uliza-supported polls the Listening Post. It was developed as a feedback mechanism to send unfiltered opinions to development partners like Global Affairs Canada. In fact, the information that we gathered in Tanzania this summer was a **unique source of input from African citizens** into Canada’s international assistance review.

**By the numbers**

**Coverage of the entire country of Tanzania**

The farmers we surveyed provided valuable insight related to income and food security, gender equality, climate change, youth and more. Read the full report at: [bit.ly/Hearing-from-Tanzanians](bit.ly/Hearing-from-Tanzanians)
The Old is New Again

Radio is reviving forgotten farming methods like composting — and teaching an older farmer some new tricks.

Nabugu Havenu is 92 years old. A seasoned farmer in the Upper West Region of Ghana, she has accumulated a lot of farming expertise over the years. And she’s seen a lot of farming practices come and go. Recently, she’s noticed a lot of farmers applying expensive chemicals and fertilizers to their fields to try to make their crops grow. But, she’s witnessing a change back to more natural and traditional ways of farming.

“When I started farming, we would put manure in the sun and make a mound so that we could sow it later. But then we started to ignore these ways […]. Now we are going back to the first ways.”

Nabugu credits a program on her local station for this positive change. It is also helping Nabugu refine some of her composting techniques, such as filling a hole rather than building a mound. She hopes to learn more about composting as the program continues.

Nabugu asks her many children and grandchildren to collect compost for her and bring it to the farm to enrich her fields of maize, groundnuts, and soya beans. Because of ongoing drought, Nabugu’s harvests were not large this year, but she hopes things will look up next season as she continues to tune in.

“The program is life because everything comes from the earth. If you don’t eat you can’t live, so the program is bringing life to the farmers.”

Congratulations to the winners of the 2016 George Atkins Communications Award!

Farm Radio International would not exist without the efforts of one exceptional Canadian farm broadcaster: our founder, the late George Atkins. Each year, we pay tribute to him and to outstanding African rural radio broadcasters through an award in his name. On the 25th anniversary of the award, we are pleased to recognize three broadcasters who work tirelessly to produce radio programs that serve farmers.

Meet this year’s winners:

Carole Leuwe is a journalist at Radio Nostalgie in Cameroon. Highlights of her four years as a radio host include producing a show about raising chickens that received many requests for rebroadcast, as well as one focused on how to avoid malaria. Carole has participated in several of FRI’s online training courses as well as a face-to-face consultation about Barza, our online community for African farm radio broadcasters.

Gideon Sarkodie of ADARS FM in Ghana has hosted and produced agricultural radio shows for nearly a decade. When one of his listening communities lost access to water after three wells were destroyed, he called on government officials to act until they were reconstructed. Gideon has earned top honours in our e-courses and regularly contributes to our online discussion forums. He also helps other broadcasters as an FRI in-station trainer.

Sarah Adongo is a broadcaster with Mega FM in Uganda. Her parents were small-scale farmers who worked hard to pay for her higher education. She feels a personal responsibility to provide farming communities with the information they need and opportunities to have their voices heard. Sarah has been involved in three FRI projects, including the My Children radio drama, which encourages listeners to grow and eat vitamin-A-rich orange-fleshed sweet potato.
In much of Africa, the typical sweet potato is white and not bright orange like we’re used to here in Canada. And although the orange-fleshed variety is the most nutritious, it is not what people are used to — and change can be hard. But radio and dedicated farmers like Zakaria Dauda of Ghana are helping to make orange the new white.

Zakaria is an orange-fleshed sweet potato (OFSP) farmer and vine multiplier. He grows, eats, and sells the colourful crop, and provides vines to other farmers so they can grow it too. He is very enthusiastic about the benefits of the nutritious tuber, which is an excellent source of vitamin A. “OFSP is good for all of us,” he says. “If you grow it very well you can sell some and leave some to eat, but I am encouraging farmers to be very serious about the eating, not selling.”

Zakaria recently had the opportunity to meet former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and his wife, Nane, who were participating in a day-long session on OFSP in the Northern Region that included a stop at Zakaria’s farm in Botanga.

Annan praised Zakaria’s work promoting OFSP, saying: “This is a great job, you should keep it up, and encourage other young people.”

Radio also helps Zakaria teach farmers what he knows about OFSP. He explains the proper processes for planting, cutting, and storing the orange tuber, as well as how to protect the growing roots from pests.

With the help of irrigation, Zakaria currently grows OFSP on two acres. Next year he hopes to increase his OFSP farm to three acres.

Zakaria is very thankful for the radio station’s cooperation. “If not [for the radio station] I will have not sold even half an acre. But because of the announcements there are people coming and meeting me at my farm.”

Radio and dedicated farmers like Zakaria Dauda of Ghana are helping to make orange the new white.

Learn more
Hear from Zakaria how radio has been key to his success. Listen to the audio postcard: bit.ly/OFSP-audiopostcard

Meet Princess Francisca, a farmer and chef who is now serving up OFSP thanks to a radio cooking show. Watch the video: bit.ly/cooking-with-OFSP

ORANGE IS THE NEW WHITE
How radio is helping African farmers discover the benefits of a new sweet potato

Did you know?
OFSP is a better source of vitamin A than carrots? Even small servings can help prevent vitamin A deficiency, a serious health issue across sub-Saharan Africa.
Volunteer Profile
Tara Sprickerhoff

Tara Sprickerhoff is a recent graduate of Carleton University’s Bachelor of Journalism program. She spent the summer of 2015 working in Accra, Ghana, as a communications intern with Farm Radio International. She returned to Ghana in early 2016 to continue her work for us, this time as a Uniterra volunteer. The Uniterra program is a volunteer cooperation program jointly operated by World University Service of Canada (WUSC) and CECI.

Tara has been tirelessly interviewing farmers and broadcasters nationwide, which she says has been a unique way to experience the country. She’s come to really appreciate the impact that radio can have when it’s done right. "My job is really fun because, at the end of the day, I get to share how FRI has made a real difference in people’s lives. Using radio is an incredibly simple but super effective way of reaching and connecting with people. Working here, I get to see how that impact is made, and it’s neat to be part of it.” Tara sees her future in radio. She loves it as a medium "because it allows people to tell their own stories in their own voice” and is happiest when she is helping others do that.

The two farmer stories in this edition of Tuning In are from Tara, and you can see more of her work on our blog. It comes as no surprise to us that Tara’s efforts recently resulted in her being named volunteer of the month for August by the WUSC team in Ghana. Congratulations, Tara!

Watch Tara in action and hear what she has to say about her volunteer work for FRI in Ghana: bit.ly/Meet-Tara

See for yourself what radio can do!

They say seeing is believing. In 2017, see for yourself what radio means for small-scale farmers in Africa by coming on the road with Farm Radio International. Registration is now open for our first-ever learning tour and safari, taking place this February in beautiful Tanzania.

If a grassroots trip to Africa is something you’ve been dreaming of, don’t delay. Space in the learning tour is limited. Contact Lydia Treadwell today at 613-761-3659 or discover@farmradio.org to make sure one of the spots has your name on it.