Ekow Yamoah is also known as “Ekow Vulcaniser” — a name he gets from his work at his tire shop in Anamabo, in the Central Region of Ghana. But his nickname could also easily be “Ekow the Unstoppable.”

Ekow started farming on the side to supplement the income from his tire shop. He grows and sells vitamin A-rich orange-fleshed sweet potato (OFSP), after learning about the nutritious tuber through a program on Radio Central, which broadcasts out of nearby Cape Coast.

Farming has not been easy for Ekow, who is blind. But he hasn’t let that get in his way.

Ekow has two apprentices at the tire shop who help him with some of the farming work, but he has learned to plant the vines on his own. He uses the length of his foot to cut the vines and to measure the distances between the rows.

Radio has also been a helpful resource for Ekow — one that he has been eager to share with neighbouring farmers.

“Since I started working with OFSP, I inform others also to listen to the radio program,” he says. “When it is time for the OFSP program I do call people around to come and sit and we all listen to [it].”

Radio has not only helped Ekow learn how to grow OFSP, but also how to turn his farming into a successful business.

“Because of the education I have had on OFSP [over the radio], I am now dealing in it. […] People have bought from me to the extent that now those who used buy from me, they now have their own vines and they are producing for me to buy from them. So it has created jobs for others also,” he says.

Ekow buys sacks of OFSP from other farmers, which he re-sells for a profit of 30 Ghana Cedis (about $10 Canadian) each. He uses his tire shop as an OFSP distribution centre for the area.

“It’s the radio teaching that has helped me to sell my product as well as the banner they provided for me to direct people to this place,” he says.

Ekow says he hopes all farmers will start to grow OFSP to “better their living conditions and especially their health.”
Information can be powerful. But it isn’t always enough to bring about change.

Indeed, it isn’t difficult to come up with examples of people not doing what they know they should. Take the issue of forest landscape preservation and restoration, as an example.

For years, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has worked with rural communities in the Mount Elgon region of Uganda to inform people about practices that can help save the remaining forest and restore some of what has been lost.

This hard work resulted in improved knowledge, but it wasn’t enough to change people’s everyday habits. And so deforestation and land use issues persisted in the region — until recently.

In 2014, we teamed up with IUCN to see if interactive, farmer-focused radio could help make a difference. After airing 23 radio broadcasts in two districts, we surveyed a representative sample of residents — about a third of whom were out of reach of the program.

The survey found that nearly everyone — listeners and non-listeners — had very good knowledge about forest landscape restoration practices. But only those who listened to the radio broadcasts were likely to try out one or more of the practices discussed over the airwaves.

And the more programs people listened to, the more likely they were to try a new practice. In fact, the survey showed that 98 per cent of those who said they listened to most or all of the broadcasts had also tried something new as a result.

The results of our collaboration with IUCN are explored in a recent article in the international, peer-reviewed journal *Society and Natural Resources*. “There is No Program Without Farmers: Interactive Radio for Forest Landscape Restoration in Mount Elgon Region, Uganda” shows that quality radio programs that are tailored to farmers’ needs and share farmers’ voices are key to helping people change their ways.

Read the full article online at: bit.ly/Radio4Trees

---

“*When farmers interact with other farmers through the radio programs, it really seems to tip the balance into practice.*” Karen Hampson, Farm Radio International

---

Learn more about this collaboration with IUCN by watching “Equipping Uganda for restoration: Radio and apps for reforesting landscapes.”

Watch here: bit.ly/IUCN_FRIvideo

---

**Listening frequency vs. practice**

- **Practice NO**
- **Practice YES**

- 100
- 50
- 0

None | One episode | A few to half | Most to all
---|---|---|---
0 | 100 | 50 | 0

---
Radio innovations getting women’s voices on the air

The spread of mobile phones in Africa is making it easier than ever for radio stations to serve their listeners.

The team at The Hangar — our radio and ICT innovation lab in Arusha, Tanzania — has come up with a number of new and innovative ways to help audience members participate in their radio programs. By putting a modern spin on the first wireless audio technology, they are part of the new radio revolution.

They have found countless new ways to help listeners ask and answer questions, give feedback, share their ideas, contribute to on-air discussions, request specific information, and more. And their work is helping broadcasting partners put the needs, expertise, and voices of their listeners on the air.

Making sure that women’s voices are heard just as much as men has required a little extra effort.

Why? Some women have limited access to radios and phones, with little to no control over when they can use them. They may also be less familiar with the technology, especially if access is an issue. Cultural barriers sometimes keep women from calling into their radio station for fear that they might be perceived to be too forward or opinionated. They may be busy when the radio program airs, or not find that the radio program speaks to their needs and interests.

At Farm Radio International, we are committed to making sure that radio serves both male and female listeners. Women farmers deserve radio programs designed with their needs, interests, and challenges in mind. They have a right to get the same benefits from radio as do their male counterparts. And they have a right to have their voices heard.

And so The Hangar has come up with several ways to boost opportunities specifically for women to participate in and benefit from rural radio programs.

**Women-only phone lines**
The simple technique of adding a women-only phone line has helped radio stations feature more women’s voices on the air. Before, the next caller on the line was more often a man than a woman (as men typically have more time to repeatedly call the station). Adding a second phone line and advertising the number as for women only has encouraged more calls from women farmers and made it possible for up to half of the voices featured in a call-in segment to be from women.

**Women-led listening groups**
Farm Radio International has also adopted several strategies for increasing the proportion of women that make up the listening audience. Community listening groups led by women ensure a female audience — and a safe space for women to explore issues and share their views with neighbours.

**Beep2vox**
In radio, "vox" is a term for voice (from the Latin). Beep2vox is our technology solution for putting more voices — and women’s voices especially — on the air.

Beep2vox allows listeners to share their views by calling their radio station and leaving a missed call or "beep" — free of charge. An interactive voice response system calls them back and gives them the opportunity to share a message that is recorded as a voicemail. The radio producer can then harvest this material and integrate it into their radio programs.

We used Beep2vox in our Her Voice on Air project in Ethiopia, Malawi, Tanzania, and Uganda. It was so successful that we are now using this approach in other projects to get more women’s voices on air.
Radio 4 Change
Introducing our 2015-16 annual report

We know that radio has the power to create real and lasting change in rural communities. Indeed, as time goes by, we are seeing more and more in our work the varied — and sometimes unexpected — ways that radio can make a positive difference in people’s lives.

That is the theme of our latest annual report: Radio 4 Change. It shares stories that demonstrate how radio, especially when combined with mobile phones, can lead to a range of positive outcomes that go beyond increased crop yields and farming income — as important as those are.

We invite you to read how, in the last year, interactive radio helped Ethiopian farmers cope with the worst drought in 50 years. How it brought a nurse to a village in Niger where the lack of medical services had been taking its toll, especially on women and children. How it is helping women and men in Tanzania break down traditional gender roles and approach the work of farming as a 50-50 partnership. And how it is helping to address childhood malnutrition in Uganda by encouraging people to grow a different kind of sweet potato.

Thank you for being part of our biggest year yet. Let’s keep creating positive change together.

Get the most out of our annual report by exploring the media-rich version online: annualreport.farmradio.org

---

Share the love on World Radio Day

Valentine's Day is for lovers. The day before is for lovers of radio.

Taking place each year on February 13, World Radio Day is a global celebration of radio. A day to reflect on its unique power to touch lives and bring people together.

As a supporter of Farm Radio International, you know that radio is unsurpassed in its ability to spread life-changing information and amplify the voices of those who are often heard from the least.

This year, we hope you’ll celebrate World Radio Day by telling us why you love radio. Give us a call or send us an email to share why you value and appreciate radio. Or share the love on social media.

We'd love to hear from you.

---

International Women's Day
March 8, 2017

Did you know that if women farmers had access to the same productive resources as men their yields would be up to 30 percent higher? And that these gains in agricultural production alone could lift up to 150 million people out of hunger?

This is just one of the many reasons why we work so hard to make radio work for women.

Source: The World Bank and ONE, 2014