When she comes home from the fields where she works, Diabou Wandia is sure to wash her hands before she starts dinner — and she makes sure her eight children do the same.

It’s a simple thing, but for Diabou and many in her community, it’s a new habit. One of many, in fact, brought about through a local radio program on Radio Djimara.

“Before the programs, we only did this periodically. But now, because of the programs, we’ve adapted and it’s become a daily habit for all of the women,” says Diabou.

Diabou lives in Sare Demba Diéo, a community in the Kolda Region of southern Senegal, just south of the border with The Gambia.

For the past several months, Radio Djimara has been broadcasting interactive radio programs on topics pertinent to the daily lives of women.

The programs are part of a larger project run by Farm Radio International in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, and Senegal called *Scaling Her Voice on Air*. The project, funded by Global Affairs Canada, aims to improve gender equality and food security among small-scale farmers, particularly women and girls.

Women are primarily responsible for childcare in this part of Senegal. The women in Kolda told us that a key struggle in their lives was the health of themselves and their children. Too many children were getting sick, they said, and they blamed poor hygiene and poor nutrition.

So, on a weekly basis, Radio Djimara created programming that elaborated on topics like child malnutrition and how to combat it; breastfeeding and maternal health; and hygiene practices: from simply washing hands, to how the community handles waste. They posed questions and took calls from local communities, like Sare Demba Diéo, where Diabou and many others listened together in a community listening group.

“Before, when it came to children and infants, protection through washing hands, using water, soap, it wasn’t done,” says Diabou. “Before, there were many children who had diarrhea, but now, thanks to the radio programs and everything around them that we learned and try to practice during our housework, it has totally diminished the diarrhea.

“This year, we haven’t seen an infant with diarrhea and that is thanks to the programs.”

The project is continuing. The next series will address gender-based violence using a radio drama. Future series also aim to raise up women as leaders within their own communities, discussing power dynamics in the household, gender-transformative practices in nutrition, food security and the rights of women, as well as other topics women in these communities tell us are important.
In Niangoloko, in western Burkina Faso, a community listening group tunes in to weekly radio programs on sexual and reproductive health. It’s a group made up of men and women, but only men were calling into the program. After a few conversations, we found out why. Women told us they had difficulty catching the number and typing it into keypad on their phone when broadcasters said it on air. Too often, the women we talked with didn’t know how to read, and therefore had difficulty mastering the keypad. In Burkina Faso, the literacy rate of women is 26 per cent — making radio especially important. It’s also indicative of the larger “gender digital divide” that we sometimes encounter in rural communities; when it comes to having the access, training, and skills to use digital tools and newer technology, women often lag behind.

But, before we could solve the issue in Niangoloko, something changed. The women were participating more than ever before. So we asked them: what helped? They told us that the group leader, a man named Adama Traoré, had decided to write down the call-in number on 30 pieces of paper, labeled them from one to 30, and distributed them to members of the group and other women in the community. The women then kept the pieces of paper in their wallets, and when the time came to participate in the programs, they looked at the shape of the numbers on the paper, and pressed the matching button on their phone. From that point on, they were able to dial the number of the radio station to participate.

“This was a good lesson for me, because it’s one of the principal challenges for the participation of women in our programs,” says Almata Konate, our regional coordinator for digital innovation. Before leaving Niangoloko, she worked with the group of women to make sure they were confident in the use of their phones.

The women of Niangoloko are not alone. We have seen time and time again that technology usage is lop-sided, with men participating much more than women. While listening groups, common to all of our projects across sub-Saharan Africa, often help mediate these issues, there’s still work to be done. It’s work we’re excited to undertake as we continue to work towards bridging the digital divide in rural Africa.
2019 George Atkins Communications Award

Named after the founder of Farm Radio International, the George Atkins Communications Award was established in 1991 to recognize rural broadcasters in Africa for their outstanding service to rural listeners.

Congratulations to this year’s winners!

**Ide Carine Tchounga**

Ide Carine Tchounga has a passion for, and a strength in, broadcasting to rural populations: going to the fields and people themselves, being close to farmers, and being solicited by them to share the experiences of others.

The broadcaster at Radio Medumba is the head of the radio station in her home community in Bangante, Cameroon. She also presents a program called Actualités agropastorale, or “Agri-pastoral News.”

Inspired by reading Farm Radio’s Resource Packs, Ide started the farming program to be closer to the local population.

Ide’s team brings together farmers and experts who “illuminate them” on areas of concern.

“This promotes contact [between farmers and experts] and in most cases the farmer’s technicians assist farmers in the field after the show,” Ide says.

Using studio and field interviews, a monthly program dedicated to the listener comments, and other feedback tools, Ide ensures the voices of farmers are at the heart of her programming.

**Seydou Camara**

Seydou Camara describes himself as a “country lover.” And, as the son of a farmer, he knows agriculture and has used that knowledge to help him as he runs the program La parole paysanne, or “The words of the farmer” on Radio Wassoulou in Yanfolila, Mali.

“Naturally, I like to serve people and in my opinion, media is a great way to put into practice this ambition,” he says.

Seydou often produces his episodes from the field, where he invites those experienced in different agricultural sectors to share their experiences with listeners. But he doesn’t stop there. Seydou also presents programs on other important rural development topics, including public health and the environment.

“When they announced that I had won the George Atkins Communications Award, I couldn’t believe it. The day of the ceremony, I was very touched, because it’s the first personal award that I’d received in my life,” he says.

**Matilda Amoah**

When Matilda Amoah first appeared on Today’s FM in 2016 as part of a panel discussion, she knew she was hooked. Then and there she decided on a new career, and asked to join the radio station team.

Now the presenter of the farmer program Kuapa, broadcast on Today’s FM in Ejura, in the Ashanti region of Ghana, she addresses the standardization of measurement of produce, an important marketing issue for farmers wanting fair prices for their products.

“Not only had I been given a voice, I had received a platform as a female farm broadcaster which I have used to encourage and inspire thousands of young people through my weekly programs,” she says.

Matilda says that radio was an escape for her when she was a child.

Now one of those voices on the radio, Matilda credits her communication skills and inquiring mind for helping her create an interesting radio program that explores new ideas each week.

Learn more about these and other past winners of the George Atkins Communications Award, at farmradio.org/GACA
You know how radio can help farmers help themselves. Now we want you to see it for yourself.

Join us on a trip to Malawi from June 28 to July 13th* this year and experience the difference that radio is making for small-scale farmers in Africa. You’ll explore Malawi through the eyes of Farm Radio International. Together, we’ll traverse the Majete Wildlife Reserve, part of the Great African Rift Valley; visit nearby farming communities and a Farm Radio project in Mangochi; and experience Lake Malawi — the crown jewel of the country. You’ll also meet the incredible staff of Farm Radio Trust, our sister organization in Malawi, and visit their office in Llongwe to see how we work with them to build effective interactive radio projects.

Space is limited. For more information, or to secure your spot, please contact Jeff Larocque by email at jlarocque@farmradio.org or phone 1-888-773-7717 x3659.

*dates may change subject to interest

Join us for the trip of a lifetime Visit Malawi!

Maclean’s magazine
We’re ranked second in Canada!

Farm Radio International is honoured this year to be named among Maclean’s magazine’s best 10 international charities in Canada. We can’t overstate how proud we are! Of course, we owe this in large part to you, our donors and supporters. You’ve placed your trust in us to steward your money, and your support has allowed us to make a big impact in the lives of small-scale farmers and rural Africans.

You can be assured that your donation will go far — all through the power of radio.

We will continue to make sure your money is used in the best way possible to make an impact. And we want to find new and better ways to report back on the work we do, our financials and how we use your donations to impact the lives of millions of rural people across sub-Saharan Africa.

2018-19 Annual Report

We’re pleased to be able to report back to you about our activities over the 2018/2019 fiscal year. This year we:

- Distributed 132 resources to 882 broadcasting partners in 40 African countries
- Worked directly with 131 of these partners on 33 projects in 11 countries
- Reached 18 million listeners through radio programs, resulting in 3.5 million improving their farming, nutrition and/or health practices

For more information about our work in 2018 and 2019, download our full annual report at farmradio.org/annualreport/

Donate online at farmradio.org

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