



SHORT EDUCATIONAL rice videos are shown and discussed in rural villages by mobile cinema units.

# MAKING SCIENCE WORK

by Paul Van Mele

*A communication campaign designed to link rice production with relevant science promises to help African farmers and processors boost their productivity*

The best agricultural research in the world won't help a single farmer if it stays on the shelf. To ensure that good science gets real-world results, the Africa Rice Center (WARDA) and partners have developed educational tools as part of a Rice Rural Learning Campaign to communicate relevant science and to stimulate learning all along the path from field to market. By promoting better access to scientific results, the campaign is helping African rice farmers and processors improve both rice productivity and marketing opportunities.

The campaign aims to trigger rural learning by enhancing rural communities' awareness of promising rice technologies developed by WARDA and partners related to land, water, crop, and postharvest management. By linking video with mass media, the initiative stimulates local adaptation of the technologies, nurtures local ownership, and builds on existing capacities and networks.

In 2005, WARDA, in collaboration with UK-based Countrywise Communication, trained a team in Benin to produce farmer learning videos. In 2007, WARDA also taught partners to produce rural radio scripts, which, as well as teaching about rice production, also advertise video distribution points.

By 2008, 20 educational radio and video programs had been produced. WARDA distributed the videos to 80 partners in 28 African countries, who in turn shared them with over 300 local organizations. Canada-based Farm Radio International distributed radio scripts on rice technologies to more than 300 rural radio stations across Africa, and monitored their use.

Partners translated the videos and radio programs into, respectively, 20 more than 40 local languages. The two media were creatively combined to reinforce the messages.

By strengthening 380 organizations, the videos helped train more than 2,500 trainers and benefit more than 100,000 rice farmers and processors across Africa. The radio programs' potential audience constituted millions of farmers.

The Rice Rural Learning Campaign, which is funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the Government of Japan, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, has already enjoyed much success. In Guinea, for example, the nongovernmental organization Association pour la Promotion Economique de Kindia (APEK) trained thousands of farmers using campaign videos before reinforcing the lessons through Radio Guinée Maritime, which aired interviews with farmers about what they had learned. The resulting radio program reached up to 800,000 people. Gambian TV also broadcast the

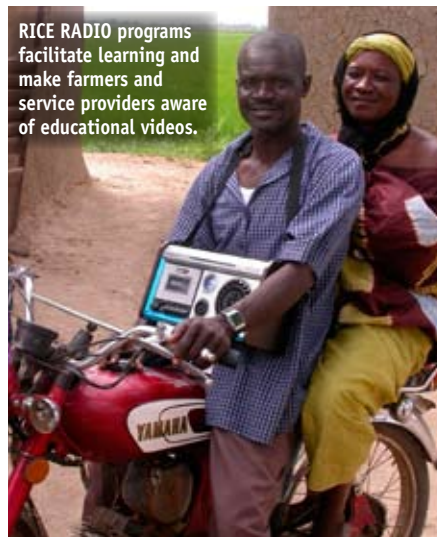
videos in Mandinka (The Gambia's main language) in 2007 and 2008.

To revive agriculture in war-torn villages in northern Uganda, the Agricultural Productivity Enhancement Program showed the videos to more than 7,000 farmers living in refugee camps. In addition, Sasakawa Global 2000 distributed local-language copies to extension (training, education, and technology dissemination) services and farmer associations and also engaged policymakers, a TV station, and a farmers' newspaper.

In Benin, mobile cinema vans reached more than 50,000 farmers. Interactive programs on rural radios and a question-and-answer service helped promote the videos and make use of audience feedback.

To assess the videos' impact, 200 women were surveyed in Benin. After watching a video on parboiling rice, over 90% cleaned and dried their rice properly (compared with 20% in a group who did not watch the video), and 42% adopted improved rice parboiling (compared with 5% in the nonvideo group). Not only did rice quality improve, allowing the women to obtain a higher price, but they also learned to work better as a group.

The Rice Rural Learning Campaign creatively combines educational video with mass media. The initiative has already mobilized a vast network of local actors to the benefit of African rural communities, and is set to continue this success in the years to come. 🍌



RICE RADIO programs facilitate learning and make farmers and service providers aware of educational videos.

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