WEHUBIT

Learning from
DAS4CSA project: Digital advisory services for climate smart agriculture

Can digital social innovation support the upscaling and adoption of Climate Smart Agriculture best practices, how and in which context ?

Country
Senegal

Implemented by

FARM RADIO INTERNATIONAL

Budget
349.477 €

Duration
06/2019-12/2021

Contributions to SDGs

2 ZERO HUNGER · 5 GENDER EQUALITY · 13 CLIMATE ACTION

Implemented by

Enabel

Financed by

Belgium
partner in development

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Reason

In Senegal, in the Kolda region, agriculture is practised by 70% of the population and can greatly contribute to the **food and socio-economic security** in the region.

However, most smallholder farmers – men and women with less than 5 ha - have **little access to resources**: productive assets, agricultural support services, information on agricultural practices to improve production, management of and/or resilience to climate change.

The **sharing of knowledge and practices** between farmers and stakeholders (cooperatives, agricultural associations, training organisations and researchers) is also limited due to both sides' **lack of time and resources**. The agricultural sector in the Kolda region is mainly made up of a multitude of smallholder farmers, scattered across sometimes very remote communities. Reaching a large number of farmers at once and gathering their questions is therefore a more efficient means of farm advisory than systematic physical meetings.

Digital social innovation

The digital social innovation of the project consisted of two complementary approaches: a digital and a "traditional" one.

1. Offer the region's farmers an **information service on the sector and the extension of good agricultural practices via community radio**.

3 radio stations in the Kolda region, which already existed and were listened to by the region's farmers, were reinforced in order to:

- disseminate information based on **local, gender-specific** and **real-time issues**
- develop and maintain a **consultative** and **interactive digital service** via the Uliza platform. The Uliza platform is a web-based management and interaction application that is combined with radio. It allows information to be shared and feedback to be collected via real-time mobile interaction during radio broadcasts.

It consists of

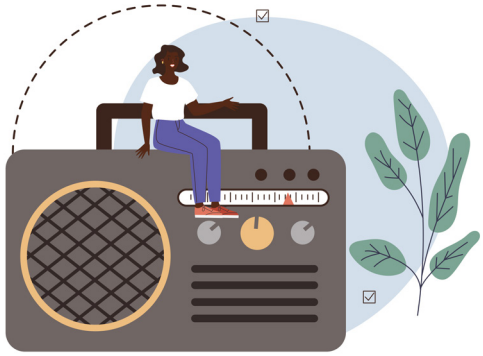
- **Uliza Survey:** surveys on needs and interests sent to farmers who are members of community listening groups, allowing to define the content of the programmes and to mobilise the relevant expertise;
- **Uliza Answers:** mechanism that allows farmers to ask questions and receive answers and advice via their mobile phone. Farmers call a number and leave a recorded question which is then sent to an agricultural expert. The response is recorded and the farmers receive the answer through an automated phone call;
- **Uliza Alert:** an automated voice and text service that sends out warnings linked to the programmes (topic, start time, etc.) to listening group members.

2. Share the (means, capacities) with the **community listening groups** around the 3 radios. These community listening groups were called together once a week. A facilitator equipped with a smartphone, megaphone, solar radio and solar panel coordinated each group. This allowed the group to listen to the programme, discuss it and interact with the radio hosts together via the Uliza platform.

From the perspective of the human rights-based approach (HRBA)

The goal of the HRBA is, on the one hand, to empower **rights holders** – **marginalised farmers in the Kolda region** – to claim their rights and participate in their own development process and, on the other hand, to share the capacity with **duty bearers** – the **State** – to respect, protect and fulfil these rights.

The DAS4CSA project focused mainly on empowering rights holders by providing **knowledge and supporting peer learning**. The development and implementation of digital social innovation under Wehubit can however serve as an advocacy tool to build a national strategy for the digitalisation of agricultural advisory at state level.



26 community listening groups of approximately 25 people have been set up by the project
80% of which were women

126.223 farmers have adopted at least one climate-smart agriculture good practice, of which **55.664** are women

28.145 interactions via Uliza Survey

KEY MESSAGES

- Digital social innovation relies on the **combination of radio** and **mobile phones** to improve access to information, to make information as relevant as possible and to foster interaction and the sharing of good practices between stakeholders. The added value of Uliza lies mainly in the "relevance of the information" and in particular in its ability to **centralise questions** and **problems encountered by farmers** and **to address these in the radio programmes**.
- The **relevance of the information** disseminated in the radio programmes (i.e. gender-specific information, linked to the needs and context but also to existing perceptions and – sometimes incorrect – knowledge) was ensured by (1) the involvement of **state technicians/trainers** with a good knowledge of the field and the communities in the design of the programmes, (2) the collection of **local knowledge** through the participation of farmers in the radio programmes, and (3) the **massive use of the Uliza survey**.
- The interaction between radio and farmers, which was initially managed via Uliza in the context of radio broadcasts, **has evolved towards the WhatsApp application** for several reasons: (1) quicker exchanges, (2) the possibility of questions or remarks being directly followed up by peers, (3) the sustainability of the exchanges, beyond radio broadcasts alone, and (4) the ease of access and mastery of this tool by a large number of farmers.
- The **community listening groups**, through their regular meetings around the radio broadcasts **socio-economic dynamic** and **to the networking of farmers**. On the one hand, the increased familiarity and the trust between members have fostered **peer-to-peer exchange** on good farming practices. On the other hand, the community listening groups have evolved to include other issues encountered in the communities.

> Since we've listened to the project's agriculture programs, we are taking constant preventative measures and are making the most of the opportunity to replant trees in order to regenerate our forest
>
> ***Aissatou Baldé, groundnut farmer***

> Listening together allows us to complement each other. It allows us to help each other understand everything
>
> ***Aminata Baldé, member of the community listening groups***

More stories about the project?

LESSONS LEARNED

Inclusion and equity

Whether it is through the Uliza application, with its multiple methods of communication – voice, texting, Unstructured Supplementary Service Data, instant messaging, social media – or through WhatsApp, the project has used **written** and **spoken communication** to be as inclusive as possible for a largely illiterate audience.

In terms of accessibility, the added value of the Uliza application for end-users is the ability to **send** and **receive data via any basic mobile phone**; unlike WhatsApp, which requires the use of a smartphone, an internet connection and more digital skills, which are often lacking in remote communities where the 45+ population is not digitally literate and only 1 in 10 women has a smartphone.

The community listening groups enabled **people without smartphones and/or personal radios to have access to radio broadcasts** and **interaction tools**. However, the migration of communication to WhatsApp, even outside radio broadcasts, de facto excludes this audience from the exchanges.

Given the many **local languages** in the Kolda region, radio programmes were broadcast in a variety of languages. At the interaction level, the project first sorted the messages so that spoken or written responses were given by language or even area. This sorting step may however lead to a significant workload.

The radios were specifically trained on **gender issues in agricultural advisory services** in order to integrate women's perspectives or priorities in the topics covered (e.g. wood cutting for cooking in the context of deforestation). In addition, a "knowledge in the feminine" programme, was specifically addressing issues or topics of greater concern to women, also allowing more targeted mobilisation prior to broadcast.

Stakeholders and users' responsiveness

Broadcasters do not have a broad and accurate knowledge of agriculture, which can hamper the quality of programming and interaction if there is no expert present. There is a need for **capacity sharing of radio stations**, so that they can create qualitative programmes with relevant speakers and support interaction with farmers.

Farmers with smartphones (1 in 10 women and 3 in 10 men) continued to **use WhatsApp to share good farming practices with each other**, beyond the interaction with the radio and the community listening group's meetings. This networking has led to exchanges between villages on common issues and good practices.

Several elements were put in place to **maximise access to information**: broadcasts at fixed times to turn listening into a habit, involvement of farmers from different communities in the broadcasts, communication and awareness-raising by the community listening group's moderators, systematic dispatch of warnings before the start of the broadcasts and announcement of the topics covered.

Use of digital tools beyond project's end

For the end-users – the small scale farmers – the project addressed three needs: access to information through broadcasts and the strengthening of community listening groups; relevance of information through the involvement of the right stakeholders and mechanisms for interaction with farmers; and support in the application of good practices through peer-to-peer exchanges via community listening groups (and beyond), and contact with experts.

- The **radio broadcasts** will continue to be followed by farmers because they fill in a need for information adapted to their context and problems, are accessible to all and are already used outside the project.
- **WhatsApp groups** will continue to be used by people with smartphones as it is an easy-to-use networking and sharing tool that does not require additional learning.
- The dynamics of the **community listening groups** and the opportunities for sharing that they offer have had a particular impact on the communities, which have even set up community listening groups outside the DAS4CSA project. The sustainability of community listening groups in the long term could however be dependent upon the presence of a trained and equipped facilitator, who mobilises and brings people together. This human resource will continue to be provided by the radio stations, within the framework of their own strategies.
- The **Uliza platform** represents a significant cost for the project - €33.691.48 including server, VIAMO and maintenance costs, i.e. €1.2 per interaction via ULIZA Survey in the DAS4CSA project - which must be considered in relation to its added value for end-users.

Uliza is also a **management application** for radio projects and stations. The tool collects radio resources, which are then available and accessible to all community radio stations working with Uliza and forms a database of information to better prepare their programmes.

PERSPECTIVES

Farm Radio International will collaborate with the Ministries of Community Development and Agriculture to design a **national strategy for the digitization of farm advisory services.**

Farm Radio International has been in discussions with the Agence nationale du Conseil agricole et rural (ANCAR) to consider **expanding the innovation tested in DAS4CSA** to other regions of Senegal.

Farm Radio International plans to use the results of the DAS4CSA project to extend it to other areas and countries (Senegal and Burkina Faso) and to **further integrate aspects of agricultural digitalisation, weather information, and adaptation to climate change**, within the framework of an IDF initiative - Development Innovation Fund.

Farm Radio International has signed agreements with partner radio stations on its **social franchise** to jointly seek funding from international donors.

This learning sheet has been developed in the framework of the Wehubit Knowledge Exchange Network
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