

ARDA's GenARDIS: Small Grants Fund - Interim Report, March-July, 2009

Project Title: *Majalisar Mata Manoma*: A meeting place for women farmers connecting with radio and Mobile Phones

Country: Nigeria

Person writing report:

Ms Seember Nyager – Program Officer, ARDA and officer in charge of GenARDIS funded project (“Majalisar Mata Manoma”)

Ms Alison Data Phido – Executive Director, ARDA and Project team leader

Main activities implemented during this period:

- PROJECT INCEPTION WORKSHOP
- BASELINE/FORMATIVE RESEARCH
- THEATRE FOR DEVELOPMENT
- LISTENER'S CLUB SET UP AND INAUGURATION
- USE OF RADIO AND MOBILE PHONE TRAINING
- ADVOCACY CONTACTS
- PRODUCTION AND AIRING OF 3 OUT OF THIRTEEN EPISODES OF A 30-MINUTE RADIO PROGRAM
- WOMEN FARMER ORGANIZATION FORMED

Results of activities:

- INCEPTION WORKSHOP/STAKEHOLDERS' ORIENTATION

The inception workshop was an opportunity to provide orientation and to establish communication lines within all the partners in this project. Personal contact was established and together, activities and corresponding timelines were set. Roles to be played by everyone were also discussed. (*See appendix 1: Inception Report attached*)

- BASELINE RESEARCH

From the baseline research, ARDA and her consultants were given an insight into the needs of the people. It helped to determine if indeed, the project would be feasible. It was revealed that women had much less access to mobile phones; hence justifying the grant of a phone to only the female listener club. The baseline also drew out the issues including gender inequality, that were priorities to be addressed by the radio program. Furthermore, the baseline activity was the stellar opportunity for seeking the consent as well as influencing the positive attitude of the community towards

the project. It helped to determine the appropriateness of local theatre as a development tool which was found acceptable. (*see appendix II: Baseline Study Report*)

- THEATRE FOR DEVELOPMENT

The theatre for development (TFD) served as a means for mobilization and awareness of community members, particularly women. At the end of the first week of TFD activities, most villagers were aware of the proposed radio program. The TFD also played a major role in shaping attitudes and discarding those attitudes that would hinder the project's project. Some of the drama sketches painted pictures of opposition (some which were experienced; others likely), hence community members saw themselves in the characters and situations portrayed. This helped to clarify their own negative attitudes and prejudices as a first step to curbing them. (*See appendix III: Report of Theatre for Development TFD Sessions*)

- LISTENER'S CLUB SET UP AND INAUGURATION

The preceding activities of the project made the formation of the listener's club relatively easy. Hence, the women were not faced with opposition from their husbands, rather stories were told of encouragement. In fact, women who did not participate in the previous activities as a result of their gender roles, (workload especially) struggled to join the listener's clubs. Every week, the women are more willing and able to organize themselves with less effort on ARDA's part. The last Sunday ARDA visited, all the women were already seated on arrival of our team. The club has been registered as a farmers' organization with the local government office of cooperatives with the name of "Agbada Association." (*See our blog accounts of the process of implementation at www.womensmeetingplace.wordpress.com*)

- USE OF RADIO AND MOBILE PHONE TRAINING

A cell phone and accessories that will enable it to function in the remote village location of the project, were purchased and granted to the members in advance of the commencement of the radio broadcasts.

Members learned to use the cell phones to make and receive calls as well as send text messages.

The women recorded discussions, songs and opinions in preparation for the radio program. Replaying these inserts for the women farmers to hear their own voices is part of the strategy to empower them. This created excitement in the entire community for the forthcoming radio broadcasts.

- ADVOCACY

To begin with, carefully executed contacts both at the community, local government and state levels have succeeded in gaining the trust and support of some key persons for the project.

The Village chief, the sole administrator of the local government authority, the Pastor and his wife, the manager of the Micro-finance bank in the area, the Managing Director and top officials of the Kaduna state Media corporation, owners of the Radio station, officials of the Agricultural Development Program are some of the influential persons who have declared or shown active support.

The radio station head assigned a Gbagyi (the local language) producer and presenter and gave us a much discounted rate for both production and airtime. With the support of the management the forthcoming program was heavily advertised daily for 3 weeks thus raising expectations from our project community members as well as other Gbagyi all over northern Nigeria. It airs on both the FM and AM bands thanks to them.

- **PRODUCTION AND AIRING OF RADIO PROGRAM**

The radio programs have begun to air on July 12, 2009 (Sundays at 2.30 – 3.00pm) and have so far aired 3 episodes. The program format is live, consisting of music, host chit-chat with an expert guest, inserts recorded by the listeners' club members, phone-ins.

The project women had provided a priority list of issues which the radio programs have addressed, relying mostly on scripts downloaded from the Farm Radio International's website. This is a successful strategy to build trust and ownership by project beneficiaries as well as another way to empower them.

- **WOMEN FARMERS' ORGANIZATION FORMED**

Recognizing from the onset the value of achieving strength in numbers, the women members of the Listener's club had expressed an interest in evolving into a vocational, development group or a farmers' cooperative. ARDA staff helped to assemble the information and guidelines for formalizing the group and the foot work required to deal with the various bureaucrats. With our assistance the group has registered with the local government with the name, *Agbada Association*. The women showed their commitment through the forfeiture of their weekly meeting refreshment allowance for use instead to pay for the registration of their association and open a bank account as a first step to leveraging investments to their enterprises.

Achievements (if possible indicators of achievements):

- The women are more dedicated to the club. This is noticed in their improved punctuality to the weekly meetings
- The Gwagwada women's association decided to use their refreshment allocation to register their association with the government and also open an account with the micro finance bank in their community.
- Most of the women have learnt to use mobile phones
- Most of the women are outspoken and eager to express their opinion during the recordings, a noticeable difference from the early days of extreme reticence.
- More women from the project call in to the programs than there is time to accommodate.
- Through the mobile phone, the club women have started generating income for their association

Any challenges identified:

- The basic challenge ARDA faced was mobilization of the women. Even after the baseline research which included focus group discussions, and an expression of interest in participating in the project, the women never really showed up at agreed times. The main reason was that they had much housework or had to gather sand from the stream, a major source of off-season income, thus making the group activity second to all the other things they must do. The listener's club activities, therefore, had to be fixed for Sunday which is the only day these women work a little less.
- The people of Gwagwada claimed to have received promises of "change" from government and organizations in the past which had amounted to nothing. This formed the origin for their initial reluctance and suspicion towards the project; however the theatre for development captured and adequately addressed this issue.
- The perception of the villagers towards development posed a challenge to the implementation of the project. The villagers seemed to view tangible products that would meet short term needs of more importance than efforts to empowerment that would assist them in sourcing for needful information and sustainable development even after the project.

Unexpected/unintended outcomes:

Very surprisingly, two key male figures within the community willingly made it a point of duty to participate in the project once we begun TFD rehearsals. It is believed by ARDA that their efforts, time and presence helped curtail possible opposition from the spouses of the participating women. One of

these men is an elderly man known as Auta, a well respected farmer and elder in the community. Another is a primary school teacher who many men look up to on account of his educational qualifications.

During the club meetings, ARDA staff always asked permission to video record sessions and take photographs with a digital camera. Soon the younger members started showing interest in the recordings and immediate photo feedbacks so they were given an opportunity to handle both cameras and record themselves. This has started a competition of nearly all the women struggling to handle the camera and do the recording. The demystification of the process of recording motion and still pictures is a confidence booster and ensures a lighthearted, fun and playtime for these women during the meetings.

Did you identify gender issues?

E.g. women prevented from participating by husbands

During the baseline research, the focus groups for men and women were held differently so that the women did not feel pressured to act or answer in a certain way; likewise when the questionnaires were distributed men and women were asked separately.

Some of the women were timid in their responses at first, but as a few others spoke out, the responses from others changed.

Women's and girls' workload is disproportionately heavier than that of their male counterparts. An activity that requested participants to chart the daily diaries of the opposite sex acted as a sensitization of community members to this problem while FGDs discussed the significance of the issue. The TFD skits also portrayed this topic.

Did you identify gender and ICT issues?

E.g. men had easier access to mobile phones than women because they had money

Despite overwhelming poverty of families, more men than women owned mobile phones. Only two women in a group of 25 had a phone of their own. But a better percentage of men had phones.

While the women shrank from spending hard-earned money they claim was for food and school fees etc., men were not constrained by such self-sacrifice when they decide to purchase cell phones and top-ups.

Despite having severally indicated bringing a radio from home to the Sunday listeners' club meeting would not be a problem, none of women was able to

bring one to the meeting of July 19 (the day of broadcast for episode 2) because their husbands had taken control of the radios so as to listen to the program at home. It took scampering around looking for a spare radio before we were able to source for one from the sole administrator's house minutes before the program began. He has since bought and gifted a radio to the club.

Did you identify ICT policy issues?

E.g. cost of landlines prohibit use of internet

Given the low rate of literacy in Gwagwada, there is no cybercafé in the community and many of these women know very little or nothing about the internet, nor is there much awareness as to the value of such a resource.

Though Gwagwada was a former train station post and only 50 kilometers out side Kaduna towards the federal capital of Abuja, landlines are not available and out of the seven or so mobile phone service providers, only one of them MTN, has signals that are visible here and only if boosters in form of a masted antenna are added on. We noticed that men had to climb the nearby hill tops to look for network. Though the companies boast about expanding their coverage, the poorer rural locations are not in their plans due to commercial and poor infrastructural investment by government.

A summary or short narrative on first 6 months of implementation:

An inception meeting was held and attended by ARDA staff, the consultants, a representative from the radio station, an extension worker and two representatives of and from Gwagwada community. The project was discussed in detail, roles were assigned and timelines allocated for all the activities. ARDA paid a courtesy call to the radio station to discuss the project with the management and appeal for support. Subsequently they assigned a producer to the project and bargained a discounted airtime rate. ARDA went later to familiarize the proposed producer and presenters with the objectives of the project and brainstorm on program format and methodology. Micro-finance banks and other corporate financial institutions were visited in order to find out the variety of service packages available to farmer organizations. Thereafter, a visit was paid to the community by ARDA and one of the consultants Dr. Sola Adeyanju. With the help of the community representatives who attended the Inception workshop, a baseline research which included questionnaire distribution, key informant interviews and focus group discussions was carried out in the community. After the results from the baseline were obtained, a theatre for development (TFD) forum was organized and implemented with the villagers as active participants. Using the baseline and TFD as mobilizing agents, male and female listener clubs were formed in anticipation of the up-coming radio program. The women' club was

granted a mobile phone, antenna and start-up phone recharge cards; they were taught how the phone can be used to make and receive calls as well as send text messages. The women' club has also metamorphosed into a bona-fide farmers' cooperative and are in the process of starting a credit line with a micro finance bank with a guarantee from the state-government run agricultural organization.

Activities and deliverables for the next 6 months

- Continue to produce and air the weekly radio programs through the next 10 weeks (up till October 4, 2009)
- Correspondingly, active listening and participation will continue and proffer added value within and during this period.
- Post program evaluation study is planned for October.
- More theater for development sessions will be held
- November- Reporting and Documentary production and dissemination to donors, partners and community.
- Plan way forward with the community and radio station.