

PODCASTING

Recording and using local voices for knowledge Sharing

Introduction

In many remote rural areas people are living without access to electricity, mobile phones or community radio. Literacy levels may also be low in such areas. Appropriate ways of sharing knowledge in these areas are in local languages using local voices. A mix of new and established ICT can offer a useful solution to the knowledge needs of local people. Using a digital recording of local voice giving appropriate information on, for example, a livelihood topic such as the veterinary care of an ox or goat the audio can be played by a local community.

Software

Open source software for recording and conversion to MP3 format can be downloaded free of charge. One popular software package is Audacity which will run on any computer: Mac, Linux, or Windows based. Audacity can be downloaded from: <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/> Use Audacity to record audio on your computer and edit in a number of formats such as MP3 or WAV. Full tutorials and help sections are available at: <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/help/>

Hardware

Appropriate hardware will depend on local conditions prevailing in a particular project. The quality of the recording will be improved if you use a dedicated microphone rather than one built into the laptop. We have used standard MP3 players (without a radio) in conjunction with external loudspeakers as shown in the photograph below. Such an arrangement allows approximately 50 people to listen in an outdoor environment.



Figure 1: Listening to a podcast in Gwanda South, Zimbabwe. Photo: David J Grimshaw

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Knowledge Sources

The quality of the knowledge product is crucial to the uptake. Use well respected sources such as the local or national agricultural extension service or veterinary service. See the Guide to Local Content in Local Voices (Grimshaw & Gudza 2011). Translate into the appropriate local language and use a local person to make the recording, taking care to use local idioms and dialects.

Reaching the First Mile

In most remote rural areas there will be no available Internet access so distribution of the audio file by podcasting will not be appropriate. In such case the hardware (see above) will be kept in the local community by the community extensionists (residing in the same village). Implementing partners regularly visit the communities to update content. This approach keeps things simple and low cost; it also encourages the embedding of indigenous knowledge.



Figure 2: Recording a Podcast in Mbire. Photo: Lawrence D. Gudza

References and further reading

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This Technical Brief by David J. Grimshaw and Lawrence D. Gudza is based on the work undertaken in Zimbabwe by Practical Action Southern Africa.

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technical brief