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### **Improving livelihoods of rural people through quality training videos: Lessons from Access Agriculture**

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#### **Introduction**

It's widely admitted that most rural people are poor because of poor and non-sustainable access to agricultural and natural resources (Prato and Longo, 2012). Rural people highly value the knowledge to generate relevant and sustainable conditions of livelihood. For decades, development workers have acknowledged rural people's need for knowledge. In response, they have put in place several initiatives, including extension or rural advisory services offered to farmers by public extension services, NGOs, private organisations, and projects (Prato and Longo, 2012; Pye-Smith, 2012). According to Pye-Smith (2012) rural advisory activities implemented until 2011 are neither cost effective, nor efficient or sustainable. Therefore, rural advisory service providers have been looking for cost effective, efficient and sustainable extension tools and approaches. Quality training videos are one of the proposed alternative tools. This paper reports on experiences of Access Agriculture and its partners in promoting the use of quality training videos to improve the livelihoods of rural people in Africa and Asia.

#### **Material and Methods**

To discover the contribution of 'quality agricultural training videos' to livelihoods of rural people, rice, striga, and sustainable land management videos have been introduced to farmers of Bangladesh, Benin, Mali, and Uganda, and impact studies have been conducted between 2011 and 2013. We have also made the videos available for free to farmers, farmers' organisations, rural advisory services, researchers, radio and television stations, projects, students, universities, etc., via the website [www.accessagriculture.org](http://www.accessagriculture.org) and DVDs; and we monitored access, use and contributions of the videos to the livelihoods of farmers. Results of the impact studies and the video use monitoring are reported below.

'Quality training video' means a video containing both scientific and farmers' knowledge supported by relevant, clear, and stable sequences of images of farmers' practices. Access Agriculture believes that agriculture is not an excuse for poor quality videos. Farmers deserve quality as much as anyone else. A quality training video is supported by a well-written script, usually following the zooming-in and zooming-out approach (Van Mele, 2006). A quality video

also shows both regional and local relevance, because it contains both regional and local farming experiences (Bentley *et al.*, 2011). Quality training videos are promoted by the international NGO Access Agriculture via its website [www.accessagriculture.org](http://www.accessagriculture.org), DVDs and agricultural teaching, training, research, radio, television stations, and rural advisory networks. Topics covered by the quality videos range from crop management to sustainable management of natural resources, and business skills. Translation of these quality videos into local languages greatly increases the accessibility of the information by farmers, and therefore increases impact.

As of October 2014, Access Agriculture was promoting 76 programmes in 57 different local languages, plus English and French. This means that more than 600 videos are currently available and freely downloadable from [www.accessagriculture.org](http://www.accessagriculture.org). This website has already received visitors from 194 countries in the world.

## **Results and Discussion**

This section discusses who and how farmers access and use videos and the extent to which their livelihoods are affected.

### **How are quality training videos accessed and used in Africa and Asia?**

Quality agricultural training videos are accessed by farmers, rural advisory, research, teaching, and training organisations, students, and radio and TV stations, either directly via the website or via networks which download the videos, files, or by DVDs. Once accessed, quality videos are watched on laptops, computers, TV screens, wall screens, and other kind of screens either individually or collectively by farmers, rural advisory workers, video-show organisers, trainers, lecturers/teachers, students, and journalists. DVDs and video files and links are also shared among individuals and networks of farmers, rural advisory workers, students, trainers, lecturers/teachers, and other agriculture stakeholders. Appreciations of the usefulness of the videos come from all kinds of individuals and organisations around the world. The following are quotes from some agricultural training video users:

#### **Njukwe Emmanuel**

(IITA-Burundi, September 26, 2013):

*"I collected two CDs, Sustainable Land Management and Rice Advice. I watched all twelve videos in Sustainable Land Management ... I found two videos- Fertility Management (ISFM) and Stone Lines very useful. I used the Fertility management video in a farmer gathering in Gitega, Burundi and shared Stone lines with Japanese colleagues who are using gravel bags in Eastern Cameroon to control soil erosion. In general, the videos are very interesting and effective tool (visual) for technology transfer to farmers."*

#### **Nacanieli (Nat) Tuivavalagi**

(Education Department's SchoolNet Project of Samoa, November 14, 2013):

*"Thank you so much for this excellent initiative which is greatly needed at this time! It is initiatives like this that makes me optimistic of the future of mankind on this planet! I am writing from Samoa (Pacific islands) as part of the Education Department's SchoolNet Project where we are trying to find electronic resources to install on servers in our high schools' "Learning Centres" for our students. One of the subject areas is agriculture science and I request that we be allowed to include your materials in our Learning Centres."*

#### **Abigail Rumsey**

(Content developer at Plantwise Knowledge Bank of CABI, December 11, 2013):

*"I develop content for the Plantwise Knowledge Bank ([www.plantwise.org/knowledgebank](http://www.plantwise.org/knowledgebank)). We have found the Access Agriculture videos useful and would like to link to some of them"*

*from our website. The videos that we find most useful are those that are like our factsheets – they describe a crop pest, disease or abiotic problem, and give treatment advice for them (for example, your videos on Striga control).”*

### **Martin Pius**

(Coordinator of the Tanzania’s farmers organisation MVIWATA Manyara, January 7, 2014): *“On behalf of MVIWATA Manyara (Network of Farmers Groups in Manyara), I thank you for the videos. They are so educative. We are really enjoying learning using these videos”.*

### **A Technical Advisor**

(of rural sector and decentralization in Burkina-Faso, October 13, 2014): *“Thanks a lot for these videos very well made. We engaged in supporting rice producers of 21 marshlands in two regions of Burkina Faso. This work is done in 5 steps with the help of local agriculture agents. The 5 steps are built on the production cycle as follow: Step 1: Soil preparation and establishment of seedbeds; Step 2: Transplantation and thinning with fertilization; Step 3: Weeding and urea application; Step 4: Monitoring of plots; Step 5: Harvest and post-harvest. At each step, we regroup agriculture agents and we discuss the different topics with the help of the videos you put online. Sometimes, with a tablet we show some videos to farmers to illustrate our advice.”*

### **What are contributions of quality training videos to livelihoods of farmers?**

Impact studies carried out in Africa and South Asia reveal that quality training videos contribute to the improvement of the socioeconomic status of both the women and men who watched them. Bentley *et al.* (2013) reported that in Mali (West Africa), people who watched striga videos improved their understanding of striga’s biology and effects. Farmers who watched the striga videos improved their weeding practices, and as a result their cereals yields and incomes increased. In Uganda, farmers said that rice transplanting, land levelling, fertilisation and other rice videos, provided them with new and useful information, the farmers nearly doubled their yields with little increase in production cost (Bentley *et al.*, 2013). In Benin, 100% of women who watched a video on rice parboiling saw their capital asset improved, while only 50% of women who did not watch the video said the same (Zossou *et al.*, 2012). Chowdhury *et al.* (2011) reported that rice seed videos have helped women who watched the videos in Bangladesh to increase their rice yields by 15% and to improve the quality of their rice seeds which became cleaner, healthier, and easier to sell. Consequently, the women’s income and self-confidence increased and improved their contributions to production and household decision making.

Okry *et al.* (2013) showed that extension agents used the videos as proof of the theoretical technical training they have been given. Hence the videos help to reinforce the relationships between farmers and extension agents, and improve the impact of rural advisory services on farmers’ livelihoods.

### **Conclusions and Outlook**

Quality agricultural training videos raise the viewers’ understanding of farming issues, practices, and crop yields. Hence, they help improve farmers’ livelihoods. Since they contain instructive knowledge and can be watched several times, either individually or in groups, they can impact on more people than other extension approaches. It may be concluded therefore that it is worthwhile investing in the production and dissemination of quality training videos via DVD’s, electronic files or links to rapidly, cost effectively, and sustainably contribute to improving livelihoods of farmers and food security. The translation of the videos into local languages increases the accessibility of the information at farmer level.

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