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THE VIDEO TRICYCLE

Raymond Vuol

Not too long ago I realised that I had produced and translated quite a lot of agricultural training videos that could not get to farmers living in very remote areas.

So first, I tried using the mobile information vans belonging to the Ministry of Information and the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, but when I tried to work with the ministries, I noticed that their vehicles could not get to some communities due to bad roads.

One day as I was moving around town, I saw a pick-up with a covered bed full of cargo. It was doing a good job moving things around. Then I said to myself “if only I could add a set of storage boxes onto the bed of a motorised cargo tricycle, then I could use it to carry video screening tools to rural areas.”

So I decided to use my own savings to buy a tricycle, like the kind used to carry cargo. With a lot of Chinese companies now selling motor bikes in Ghana, it is easy to find a motorised tricycle.

I got a welder to cover the bed of the tricycle, and a carpenter to design compartments for the screening tools. Then I bought the tools for screening, including a generator, two DVD players, a projector, a projector screen, and a loud speaker.

After I had put all these together, I found a young man named Adam Mutawakilu who had a degree

in agriculture and needed a job. So I hired him as the screening officer, to ride the tricycle to remote communities to show videos. I hired Diana Ngog to be the screening coordinator. She monitors and directs the screening activities.

With Adam Mutawakilu’s knowledge in agriculture, he is able to respond to some of the questions farmers ask during screening. During the show, Adam fills out an attendance form to record the number of communities he visited, the number of men, women and children present, the date of screening, the phone numbers of the leaders of local farmer organisations, and he takes voice recordings of farmers who want to ask questions.

Sometimes we produce our own videos with partners, or download videos from the Access Agriculture website, and burn them onto DVDs. We partner with other NGOs in determining which communities to visit and the videos to show. These NGOs are already working with farmers in rural areas. The Ministry of Food and Agriculture also helps to select the communities and what kind of videos to show.

We then go to the communities with a variety of videos. But when we get to the communities we also try to take into account the farmer’s opinion. Many languages are spoken in northern Ghana, and we try to show the videos in a language they understand.

When Adam starts to screen videos for 60 communities, he may not come back to base for 2 months. Diana stays in the office, but she phones Adam every day to make sure that he is at post. Whenever Adam needs some money for fuel, Diana does the transfer.

If there are any problems, she moves in to resolve them. If equipment breaks down, Diana takes some money from the office to replace it, or takes an engineer for repairs.

After screening videos in 60 communities, Adam comes back to the office with 60 attendance forms that he filled out in the field. Diana goes through all 60 forms and compiles a summary report on the

- Other equipment (projector, DVD players, loud speaker, generator, stabiliser, camp bed and mosquito net.): \$2500

Total \$6200. This is only \$25 if divided by the 244 communities reached so far.

Now my operational costs:

It takes about 15 litres of fuel to fill the tank of the tricycle. A full tank can go about 150 kilometres. With \$30, the tricycle can travel about 150 kilometres.

For \$20 we can operate the generator for about 30 hours. Adam and Diana are each paid \$15 per community.



An entrepreneurial young person with a 3-wheeled motorcycle can show videos all evening for \$40.

total number of communities visited, and the number of persons present: men, women and children. After the whole screening project is completed, I then go round to do an impact assessment.

In all, we have reached 60,720 farmers, covering 244 communities since 2013. So with just a tricycle, and two people, we have been able to improve access to farmer training videos in rural communities.

The costs included:

- A tricycle: \$2500
- The wood work: \$500
- The metal work: \$799

So a community can be reached for under \$40, counting only the operational costs. While at the end of the day, costs will depend on the distance of each village, and how many communities the tricycle can reach before it wears out.

The tricycle can reach a community for about \$50 or \$60. The knowledge that the communities gain can be priceless.

RAYMOND VUOL

Countrywise Communication, Ghana
vuol.raymond@yahoo.com