Title: Enhancing Barza with key resources and information for broadcasters

By: Nelly Bassily and Blythe McKay

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Address of Research Institution: 1404 Scott Street, K1Y 4M8, Ottawa, Canada
Name(s) of Researcher/Members of Research Team: Nelly Bassily and Blythe McKay
Contact Information of Researcher/Research Team members: 1404 Scott Street, K1Y 4M8, Ottawa, Canada

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Abstract: African broadcasters are vital to the success of small-scale farmers, providing information and dialogue that help them make the most of limited resources. In November 2011, Farm Radio International launched Barza, a unique social networking site for broadcasters. The overall goal of this project was to enhance Barza so that it makes a substantial contribution to the quality, relevance, and effectiveness of development-oriented rural radio programming.

Keywords: Barza, online, social network, broadcasters, farming
Enhancing Barza with key resources and information for broadcasters: Technical Final Report

Presented to IDRC on April 30, 2014
Prepared by: Nelly Bassily and Blythe McKay
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## List of abbreviations and acronyms

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<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>COL</td>
<td>Commonwealth of Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>CTA</td>
<td>Technical Centre for Agriculture and Rural Cooperation</td>
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<tr>
<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organization</td>
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<td>FRI</td>
<td>Farm Radio International</td>
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<td>FRRPs</td>
<td>Farm Radio Resource Packs</td>
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<td>FRW</td>
<td>Farm Radio Weekly</td>
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<tr>
<td>IDRC</td>
<td>International Development Research Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>INSEAD</td>
<td>The Business School for the World</td>
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<td>KARI</td>
<td>Kenya Agriculture Research Institute</td>
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1.0 Barza background and objectives

In November 2011, Farm Radio International (FRI), with support from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA), launched Barza, a unique social networking site for broadcasters. The aim of the site is for broadcasters to connect with peers, access and share relevant and appropriate resources and information in order to increase the extent to which rural radio helps African small-scale farmers meet their food security, farming, and livelihood goals. By providing a platform for exchange of information and resources and discussion, Barza members (broadcasters) will ultimately be able to produce better radio programs for farmers, and provide opportunities for knowledge exchange between broadcasters, farmers and researchers.

The overall goal of this Project is to enhance Barza so that it makes a substantial contribution to the quality, relevance, and effectiveness of development-oriented rural radio programming.

The project objectives are:
1. Provide at least 300 African broadcasters with access to a dynamic e-Resource Centre for the production of more effective rural radio programs.
2. Provide these broadcasters with easy and reliable access to essential, locally relevant information for daily farm broadcasts, including location-specific weather forecasts and market price information for agricultural products.
3. Provide these broadcasters with information on innovative agricultural and livestock practices identified by the KARI-McGill Food Security Project on a wide range of issues.
4. Build the skills of hundreds of broadcasters by providing free e-Learning courses on a range of topics.

With pro bono support from Mark Stiles, an experienced evaluation consultant, FRI developed a logic model for Barza in April 2013, which has helped to focus monitoring and evaluation for the Project. The outcomes in the logic model replace the outcomes originally presented in the proposal submitted to IDRC. The logic model is as follows:

Barza Logic Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ultimate outcome</th>
<th>Intermediate outcomes</th>
<th>Immediate outcomes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strengthened food security through improved farming practices that meet the livelihood needs of African small-scale farmers, via a sustainable, self-managed social networking site</td>
<td>Increased interaction, including resource sharing among African broadcasters concerned with radio programming for male and female African small-scale farmers</td>
<td>Increased access to relevant and other African knowledge on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved application of knowledge and best fit practices in radio programs for male and female small-scale farmers, including CTA and FRI services</td>
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</table>
2.0 The research problem

African broadcasters are vital to the success of small-scale farmers, providing information and dialogue that help them make the most of limited resources. The African Farm Radio Research Initiative (AFRRI) (a Farm Radio International project funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation) proved that most African farmers listen to radio regularly and that effective agricultural radio can improve food security by encouraging smallholder farmers to make informed decisions about improved agricultural practices.

In order to produce good agricultural programming, broadcasters need access to the right resources and information, including scripts on important farming topics, technical information presented in a simple fashion, and weather reports. Many such resources exist online, but not all broadcasters know how to find them, and time spent searching online is costly.

African broadcasters also need accessible training. Many radio stations are staffed by inexperienced volunteers or paid staff that, despite their dedication, lack the technical skills to develop quality programs. Even seasoned broadcasters have new things to learn in the digital age. These broadcasters also have valuable insight to share with their peers.

3.0 Project activities and outputs

Activity 1: Enrich and enlarge the resource section of Barza

The e-Resource Centre on Barza originally intended to draw from a wide range of existing resources, including: FRI’s scripts, issue packs, news stories, and magazine for broadcasters (Voices); Rural Radio Resource Packs from CTA, information for broadcasters from FAO, Agfax and WrenMedia. While not all these resources are currently available on Barza, FRI has made its main resources available, namely: Farm Radio Weekly (FRW), and Farm Radio Resource Packs (FRRPs) (originally called script packages) which are filled with radio scripts, dramas, issue packs and broadcaster how-to docs.

Based on feedback from broadcasters during a face-to-face Barza workshop we conducted in Arusha, Tanzania in September 2012, Farm Radio created an e-Resource Centre that is easy to use and to search.

The e-Resource Centre has the following components:
• Searchable by keyword
• Categorized by name of document, type of resource, description, date uploaded, which user uploaded the document
• New user-generated content uploaded to the site show up in the activities stream of the site.

Barza members can now search all FRRPs directly on Barza by keyword, by category, by date, by type, and by language. To access the FRRPs, Barza members can go to: [http://barza.fm/radio-resource-packs/](http://barza.fm/radio-resource-packs/). A selection of 15 scripts in Hausa and 15 scripts in Swahili are also available as part of the FRRPs on Barza.

Barza members can also contribute their own resources to the site. By following the instructions (see Annex A), the Barza member-generated content is uploaded to the resource section. These resources are all available in French and English.

Barza members also receive FRW through an RSS feed on the main Barza page (see Annex B).

These resources are not only available to Barza members but they also are open to anyone who visits barza.fm. A decision was made to make Barza resources open and accessible to anyone on Barza so that they may be shared via widely used social media like Facebook. The added advantage that Barza members have is that they can log in and comment on the resources that are available on Barza.

FRI found the CTA resource packs were outdated and were not produced with the farmers’ perspective in mind thus not fitting well with FRI’s approach. CTA had also promised to provide a resource person to get the resources from CTA on Barza but they did not deliver on their promise.

FRI was able to connect with other interesting groups like Cultural Survival and offer Barza members 20 radio spots that inform indigenous communities worldwide about their right to free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) concerning their lands, resources, livelihoods, and communities, as outlined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: [http://barza.fm/twenty-radio-spots-about-indigenous-peoples-rights/](http://barza.fm/twenty-radio-spots-about-indigenous-peoples-rights/).

Barza also enabled FRI to gather user-generated content through “Barza events.” We sent emails to Barza members asking them to share stories through Barza for World Radio Day and for International Women’s Day (IWD) about by farmers and more specifically women farmers (for IWD) love radio. We then gathered some of the best stories and highlighted them on Barza using different digital story-telling tools. See examples of these stories here: [http://barza.fm/farmers-love-radio-for-world-radio-day/](http://barza.fm/farmers-love-radio-for-world-radio-day/).
Activity 2: Generate new content, needed on a daily basis, for the production of up-to-date farm broadcasts

Location specific weather report

To be able to provide broadcasters with easy and reliable access to essential, locally relevant information for daily farm broadcasts, FRI has worked with INSEAD, a graduate business school that has developed a dashboard tool for the automatic generation of weather forecasts for all areas of Africa. The dashboard tool is the result of years of research and development in automatic content generation based on leading agriculture and health databases and has been supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Taking the weather information on the Toto agriculture dashboard (www.totoagriculture.com), The INSEAD team has developed wordpress widgets that were customized to Barza and inserted into the main page of the Barza site, making local weather forecasts available to broadcasters on their Barza main page, using their IP addresses to pinpoint their exact location (see Annex C).

KARI-McGill Food Security Project

To provide broadcasters with information on innovative agricultural and livestock practices Farm Radio International teamed up with the KARI-McGill Food Security Project. The KARI-McGill food security project addresses broad questions of how agricultural researchers, extension workers and policy makers can more effectively reach the poorest farmers to sustainably address hunger. New strategies are required to increase smallholder adoption of resilient farming systems - that is, farming systems with the flexibility to deal with stresses and disturbances as a result of change, while retaining the same basic structure, capacity for self-organization and capacity to adapt to change.

Based on the research carried-out in the field with farmers and the research results, the KARI-McGill team supported the production of Farm Radio Weekly stories that are easy for broadcasters to understand as an easy and quick way to disseminate research results to broadcasters.

The KARI-McGill project helped FRI contract (and cover the costs) of an FRW freelance writer based in Kenya (Sawa Pius) to go to the KARI-McGill project sites in Kenya and develop four farmer-focused stories which were published in FRW and on Barza.

The stories focused on the following topics, which were identified by the KARI-McGill team as key improvements/learnings with farmers on their project:

1. Improved management of indigenous chickens
2. Tied-ridges for water management
3. Market opportunity groups
4. Enhanced food security via improved crop varieties

The FRW writer then made it to the field where he identified with the KARI-McGill team which
communities he would go to and which farmers he would meet and interview.

Once Sawa Pius came back from the field, he wrote the stories and used Barza as a platform to post the stories as well as share photos and audio files related to these stories. FRI staff used Barza to provide feedback to Pius on the stories.

The four stories produced were:
1. Farmers boost income by researching markets
2. Farmers learn from each other and get better harvests
3. Farmers turn to improved local chicken breeds
4. Improved local varieties boost food security

Local market price report for various key agricultural products

The proposed activity was to have Barza members access key market data for the markets their farmer-listeners sell to. As part of the technology developed by INSEAD, broadcasters would participate in the gathering and sharing of market price information.

This activity was not possible to implement for several reasons:
- The market gathering information system developed by INSEAD had never been tested before and therefore was not ready to be implemented on Barza.
- The costs associated with getting broadcasters to feed this system were not factored in.
- The Barza platform is already significantly slowed down by many plug-ins and could not easily support the integration of such a market information system.
- The FRI and INSEAD teams realized that this was beyond the scope of what we could implement at the moment, bearing in mind that this kind of system requires integration with standardized market information systems on the ground, which we do not have access to in all countries.

FRI also realized that it is not enough to offer market prices. There is a need to ensure the accuracy of the prices as well as a need for broadcasters to be able to interpret prices for their farming audiences.

The one activity we realized Barza could do effectively in the short-term related to market information is to provide a space for broadcasters to discuss their current knowledge of market information systems and to answer questions such as:
- What kinds of market price information programming do broadcasters currently run at their radio stations?
- Do they broadcast just the prices of different commodities or do they have a more elaborate program around farmers and their interaction with markets?
- If they do broadcast prices on the air, where do they normally source the prices of commodities?
- How do they find out what commodities their farmers/listeners are most interested in?

We plan to create a Barza discussion group on market information systems as well as make links available on Barza to existing systems such as Esoko https://esoko.com/ (for Ghana) and provide
a link to the map of different market information services and what they offer through GSMA's website: http://www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/programmes/magri/tracker

**Activity 3: Adapt e-Learning courses and materials to Barza to build skills for effective broadcasting**

In order to build the skills of hundreds of broadcasters, in partnership with the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), Farm Radio International has developed a free self-directed e-learning module, which is available on Barza in English and French.

Three e-courses (Farmer Program, the Healthy Communities, and Smallholder Farmer Innovation e-Courses) were developed by Farm Radio International with support from COL over the past few years. The courses were offered in a facilitated online learning environment, using Moodle, over a period of 8-11 weeks (to access the courses: http://www.farmradiotraining-old.org/login/index.php Login: colguest Password: COL).

For this Project, COL initially intended to hire a consultant who would spend several days going through the course material developed by FRI and transform the different modules into individual, self-directed learning modules. These modules would then be posted on Barza for members to access.

COL had a hard time finding a consultant that could carry out the anticipated work for a reasonable cost. As a result, COL gave FRI a small contract to develop the self-directed module in collaboration with an e-Course specialist consultant we had a history of working with. FRI realized that the $2,500 from COL for re-developing these e-Courses was only sufficient to develop one module. Therefore, FRI chose to develop Module 2 (VOICE Standards) of the Farmer Program e-Course.

VOICE standards were developed by FRI from the basic lessons that broadcasters have learned over decades of farm broadcasting. The VOICE standards are at the core of all FRI training for African broadcasters. VOICE stands for:

- **V** – The program values small-scale farmers, both women and men. It respects farmers for their hard work producing nutritious food for their families and the markets, often in the face of major challenges. It reaches out to farmers to understand their situation, and is dedicated to supporting them in their farming work and in their efforts to improve rural life.
- **O** – The program provides farmers with the opportunity to speak and be heard on all matters. It encourages small-scale farmers to name their concerns, discuss them, and organize to act on them. It holds to account those with a duty to hear farmers and serve their needs.
- **I** – The program provides farmers with the information they need, when they need it. Farmers require specific information and they need it in time to act on it.
- **C** – The program is consistent and convenient. It is broadcast at least weekly, at a time when women and men farmers can listen.
- **E** – The program is entertaining and memorable. It appeals to the interests and tastes of a wide range of local farmers. Complicated material is presented in a way that helps
farmers remember.

This module was first created in English and then translated to French and is available on Barza at: http://barza.fm/barza-event/use-voice-to-make-good-farmer-programming/ (In English) http://barza.fm/fr/barza-event/servez-vous-de-voice-pour-elaborer-de-bons-programmes-a-lintention-des-agricultrices-et-des-agriculteurs/ (In French)

We widely announced the module (via email and through FRW) and encouraged all of our broadcasting partners to try out the self-directed course. We also provided a space on Barza where learners could exchange thoughts about the module (see http://barza.fm/groups/voice-module-1825047206/ to view the space where Barza members can exchange). There were 144 people that opened the email message and 235 clicks on the links in the message in English and 205 people that opened the email and 317 clicks on the links in the message in French. A message about the module was also sent out via FRW which reaches close to 3000 subscribers across sub-Saharan Africa (see Annex D).

Early results from this self-directed module indicate that it is very popular. Based on the external evaluator's analysis of the Barza member survey, it is clear that broadcasters' interest in the module is high as well as interest for additional training opportunities.

One lesson we learned is that to make a module interesting to the self-directed learner more graphics are required and there is a cost associated with this. For instance, the self-directed online learning module on VOICE standards comprised some 50 screens using the Articulate rapid e-learning development software.

Provided that more financial and human resources become available, FRI would like to develop more of these resources as stand-alone modules for individuals to access via Barza.

**Activity 4: Develop “Barza Lite” a version of the site that users can access from their cell phones**

Barza is available on mobile phones and tablets for all to access. Google Analytics results show that the most popular means of accessing Barza on mobile phone is through Android phones. As compared to the full website, the mobile version of Barza offers a navigation menu that allows Barza members to easily and quickly skip to different sections of the site (see Annex E).

While allowing Barza members to do quick things like update their status on Barza and respond to a discussion thread on the go, it must be noted that a recent survey of our broadcasting partners shows that 40% still have basic phones that do not have access to the internet. Also to increase quick and easy access to Barza, newcomers to Barza can easily sign up with their Facebook accounts (see Annex F).
Activity 5: Other non-IDRC project activities on Barza

E-discussion on Farmers and agricultural value chains

The three-week e-discussion on Farmers and agricultural value chains was conducted on Barza from June 3rd to June 24th, 2013 in English and French, simultaneously. Each week had a specific focus. Both the English and French moderators of the discussions gave Barza participants overviews of what the focus was for each week of the discussion and oriented Barza members on how to use the discussion groups. The facilitators were also tasked with encouraging discussion among the Barza members.

What did participants learn and accomplish?

The course was broken-down as follows:

Week 1
In week 1, we had introductions as well as an opening discussion on farmer value chains. We asked the following questions to kick-start the discussions:

1. What is the simplest way of explaining the concept of value chains to your listener?
2. What can small scale farmers do to play a more active role and as a result, receive more benefits from value chains?

Week 2
This week focused on whether broadcasters understand what value chains are and also the role they, as broadcasters, play in value chains. Members seemed to agree on the fact that broadcasters do not seem to have a thorough understanding of value chains and their role. They shared that most broadcasters end up interested in other kinds of popular programmes and do not even consider farmer and agricultural programmes.

Week 3
The main focus of that week was getting information from small scale-farmers about what value chains they considered important and whether the members would be encouraged to do radio programmes as a result of the information they gathered, and if yes, how would they go about it. Members were asked to share the approaches they used in getting this information.

Participants learned from the resources that were shared with them for every week of the discussion. The documents shared include the following:

1. An introduction to agricultural value chains (see Annex G)
2. What information do your farmer-listeners need (see Annex H)
3. The role of radio in agricultural value chain approach: The case of the groundnut value chain in Malawi (see Annex I)
4. How to conduct a focus group (see Annex J)

The participants mainly learned from each other during the discussions by exchanging about their experiences and their ideas for programming on agricultural value chains. Those
broadcasting programmes aimed at farming and agriculture shared more about their programmes as well as challenges farmers and broadcasters face. Most participants appreciated the discussion and confirmed learning important information about value chains. Most agreed they knew about value chains but didn’t fully understand the concept. Some indicated that part of the challenge of explaining agricultural value chains to farmers is because some local languages do not have a term or equivalent for term value chain.

**Barza ambassadors e-Course**

In November 2013, FRI ran a 3-week Barza ambassador course. The term "Barza ambassadors" signifies African individuals, most of whom are radio broadcasters, who work actively to engage other radio broadcasters in Barza - the social networking site for African radio broadcasters.

Barza ambassadors were tasked with the responsibility of encouraging people in their countries to sign up to Barza, facilitate content sharing through Barza, and encourage people to come up with topics for discussion groups amongst other things. In the 3-week course, they would learn to play a key role in making sure that Barza is a dynamic site that responds to the needs of African broadcasters.

The e-course was designed to get Barza ambassadors started and/or give them additional ideas on how to nurture the Barza online community. This e-course was also an opportunity for Barza ambassadors to brainstorm together on how they would achieve some of Barza’s goals. So, in many respects, this was not a traditional course, where someone tells the ambassadors what to do/learn. Rather, it was a learning event which Barza ambassadors were shaping together.

Each week, the ambassadors focused their attention on different topics relevant to becoming Barza ambassadors and were encouraged to share what they learned with colleagues at their radio stations. The Barza ambassador course was action-based rather than content focused. The aim was to prepare the activities on the moodle training site that would then be implemented on the Barza site. There was a strong focus on working together and discussions.

The ambassadors who completed the e-course were able to accomplish the following:

- Differentiate between the role of a community moderator (Barza ambassador) and the role of an e-course facilitator
- Demonstrate the attributes of a good community moderator
- Apply communication strategies to establish and nurture online professional communities
- Apply "behind the scenes" efforts to encourage target group participation
- Identify "community champions" and assist them in playing this role
- Design structured events to enliven the community
- Demonstrate knowledge of the technical tools available in Barza

**Course overview**

**28 October – 1 November: Preparation week**

A welcome news forum message was sent to all participants.

**4 - 8 November: Week 1 – Getting started…**
At the start of week 1, participants were asked to introduce themselves. Participants were then asked to share what they found to be most challenging in Barza. This led to a discussion about everyone’s expectations for the e-course. Various questioning techniques were used to engage participants in this discussion.

Participants were required to read the 3 resources, including a technical guide. They were asked to access Barza and try out a few features if they hadn’t done this before

11 - 15 November: Week 2 – Online communication strategies
For the week 2 activity we provided 11 examples of typical posts from Barza. Participants were asked to suggest reply messages and discuss their approach/tone/voice. The aim was to learn when and how to reply. We looked out for typical pitfalls, including a too instructive approach, closing conversations rather than opening them up, etc.

18 - 22 November: Week 3 – Behind the scenes strategies
Although there were set resources and a suggested approach, this week was aimed at involving the participants in shaping the strategies for Barza specifically.

25 - 29 November: Week 4 – Initiating community events
The aim of the activity was to decide on an event schedule, so again this was a brainstorming exercise. Towards the end of week 4, participants were encouraged to share their parting reflections in the wrap-up forums and give comprehensive feedback on the e-course.

Navigating Barza.fm
To help Barza users navigate the barza.fm website, FRI’s Radio and Production Officer created a series of how-to video tutorials for navigating various parts of the website:

- Barza new account: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=snAdlHD8F0I&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=snAdlHD8F0I&feature=youtu.be)
- Barza activity feed: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l3z3yrKJI60&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l3z3yrKJI60&feature=youtu.be)
- Barza profile page: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=swqdX1gn0Po&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=swqdX1gn0Po&feature=youtu.be)
- Barza profile image: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oSfd2jPQ3c0&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oSfd2jPQ3c0&feature=youtu.be)
- Barza media: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hHKYUrTq684&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hHKYUrTq684&feature=youtu.be)
- Barza groups: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gSy4iJINAC&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gSy4iJINAC&feature=youtu.be)

Farm Radio Weekly stringer training
Using Barza as a platform, FRI has started offering online trainings to our FRW African freelance writers in English and French. We invited all our writers to participate by encouraging them to create an account on Barza. The idea is that by having an online space, we can train and interact with our writers in a more efficient manner. The same resources that were used in a face-to-face training with FRW stringers in Arusha, Tanzania were also used in the online space, allowing us to reach more writers.

The first training, which consisted of a reading and two assignments, was on how to better focus stories. The reading focused on what the four elements of a story are and the dramatic
construction of a story. Then, the first assignment asked participants to think of a story they’d like to pitch for FRW and identify the four elements of their story by writing out the character, the problem, the struggle and the resolution.

In the second assignment, to help better focus their stories, we asked the writers to use the same story from the previous assignment and summarize it in a simple phrase that follows the formula "Somebody doing something for a specific reason." We also created a writers’ lounge space where the freelancers could casually exchange with each other and ask questions.

A second training has also taken place on how to better write for radio. Three simple tips on how to write for radio were given along with examples of what simple and complex sentence structures look like and what the difference between active and passive voice writing looks like. As an assignment, freelance writers were asked to submit three paragraphs that describe a scene from their daily lives to better focus on how to write for radio.

FRI will also continue to implement online trainings and discussions with freelance FRW writers on Barza that will focus on asking the right questions and how to make good intros.

4.0 Project outcomes

The FRI team working on Barza has faced significant challenges related to the technical expertise required to build an effective website, including hiring a consultant web developer who did not deliver the work and was fired as a result. Despite these challenges, FRI was able to meet many project outcomes, particularly the immediate outcomes outlined in the logic model.

Increased access to relevant and appropriate info in 1 location on the part of African broadcasters, including women

Through Barza, access to relevant and appropriate information in one space was been a challenge (especially on the technical side) but through the e-Resource Centre we have offered Barza members access to many FRI FRRPs that give a wealth of information on various agricultural topics. We have also offered Barza members access to accurate weather forecasts for the locations they are signing on to Barza from. FRI recognizes that more needs to be done to increase access to information broadcasters need for their farm broadcasts, and also to help them make optimal use of these resources for their broadcasts. (For example, FRI would like to create a live chat function on Barza or webinar sessions with Farm Radio International’s managing editor, who would be available to help broadcasters with how to adapt radio scripts or field questions about how to use and best adapt FRI’s radio broadcasting materials.)

Increased access to other African broadcasters and organizations/individuals supporting broadcasters and African small-scale farming

The increased access to other radio African broadcasters is one of the strengths of Barza as the site steadily attracts and sustains African broadcasters as Barza members. The challenge is keeping broadcasters engaged and coming back to Barza. As the external evaluation of Barza indicates (See Annex K), as of April 22, 2014, Barza had registered 770 users, 522 of which
indicate their location as within Africa, which are beyond the IDRC performance targets. The fact that surveyed Barza members indicated that the new site is useful and much improved over the first site bodes well for growing the user base.

Further, the Barza Ambassador e-Course has definitely been a way for FRI to get Barza members more engaged and ambassadors to understand the importance and challenge of maintaining constant contact and what it takes to make an online community thrive by being user-driven. Barza ambassadors have developed a strong understanding of the importance of ‘welcoming’ new Barza members in order to grow the Barza community. FRI realizes that Barza ambassadors need additional training on how to supporting on-going contributions from and discussions with Barza members.

**Strengthened knowledge on the part of African broadcasters about the needs of African small-scale farmers**

One of the main ways in which Barza has strengthened the knowledge of African broadcasters about the needs of African small-scale farmers was through the Farmers and agricultural value chains e-discussion. Through this activity, participating broadcasters increased their knowledge of: what is a value chain, how to broadcast about value chains and encouraged broadcasters to talk to their farmer listening audience to find out what their needs are in terms of which crops they grow and what they should focus on in their broadcasts about these crops, what are their needs and challenges with growing, marketing, and selling crops. Barza members surveyed reported that the thematic e-discussion helped strengthen their understanding of the needs of African small-scale farmers and the importance of agricultural value chains.

This table shows how the broadcasters who participated in the discussion on value chains self-assessed being more comfortable broadcasting to farmers about agricultural value chains after the 3-week discussion on agricultural value chains:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ability to produce a program on value chain</th>
<th>Pre-survey response rate (%)</th>
<th>Post-survey response rate (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not all confident</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat confident</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confident</td>
<td>49.4</td>
<td>56.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very confident</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>39.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It has become quite clear that in order to strengthen African broadcasters' knowledge of the needs of farmers, FRI needs to focus on facilitating more discussions on Barza on specific agricultural topics but also by providing news (through Farm Radio Weekly or a modified version that focuses on news dissemination) in a relevant and up-to-date manner and more training opportunities.
Improved knowledge on best fit practices about how to broadcast to African small-scale farmers

One of the key best fit practices that Barza members have had access to is a document called 75 ways to fix your farmer program. In 2010, FRI gathered information about farmer radio programs from radio stations in Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania and Malawi. We visited twenty stations and two production houses and listened to their farmer programs. We posed hundreds of questions to the people making the programs and to the people listening to them. Based on our findings, we published a list of tips for broadcasters who want to improve their farmer programs. The document we published is an amalgamation of tips on how radio, if used effectively, can help farmers get the information they need, when they need it and how to include farmers in the discussions of how best to grow the crops that feed their families, and how to make some money at the market.

Related to that, FRI has also improved Barza members’ knowledge by offering how-to guides in Barza’s resource section. The topics covered in these “how-to” docs range from “How to Learn About your Audience and What Audience Members Need from your Program” to storytelling and how to conduct focus groups with farming communities.

5.0 Overall assessment, recommendations and future plans

Barza is a unique service, which is both exciting and challenging. If FRI is to continue to grow Barza as a service and if we are to look at it as a one-stop shop, we will need more human and financial resources. As proven by the results from the surveying of Barza members, the e-discussion on agricultural value chains and the VOICE self-learning module in 2014 make it clear that interactions among Barza members through facilitated discussions and the need and interest of broadcasters for further training should be included in our future work. How we use the e-Resource section of the site to contribute to the expressed needs for interaction on the site and training of broadcasters will also be a key point for the future.

Lessons learned:

By implementing this Barza project, FRI staff have learned to better understand online spaces. The following lessons-learned include lessons identified in the external evaluator’s report as well as some additional lessons staff learned:

- Allow the user-driven nature of Barza to focus its services in the future;
- Build service one at a time and well;
- Recognize the costs and time involved with web development;
- Pay closer attention to language, particularly in its role in growing the user base and sustaining participation, while ensuring it does not fragment interaction within the community.
- Increasing women's participation will take a concerted team effort and require a gender strategy
- Need to find creative solutions and resources to internet access and connectivity challenges (such as using SMS and mobile phone messages to alert broadcasters about
new resources or upcoming trainings but also by marketing Barza resources and news stories posted on Barza using other already existing social networks to increase Barza's reach.)

- Need to diversify the sources of funding for Barza.
- Barza needs to be a team effort, both amongst various FRI staff but also in supporting Barza ambassadors in their roles and encouraging other members to market and promote Barza offerings.
- Use Barza as a platform and build other projects into it for sustainability, but with African broadcasters and constituents “owning” the programming;
- Keep web/IT technical knowledge in-house, and hire someone with appropriate expertise;
- Start small and build services and technical features gradually;
- Continue the use of a French-speaking facilitator, as it helps to increase and sustain Francophone participation;
- Draw explicit lines between the role of involved third parties as partners or funders; and
- Devote more resources to monitoring and evaluation, particularly in project proposals so that funding is available for this component when necessary.

Recommendations to IDRC

The following are three recommendations FRI has for IDRC as a result of this Project:

- Given that developing a social network for poorly connected areas poses many challenges to participation, FRI recommends that IDRC supports advances in policies around internet governance on the African continent to ensure reliable connectivity for all and encourage governments to adopt progressive policies. While it is important to encourage the creation of innovative websites like Barza, it is equally important to ensure that the end-users have proper access.
- FRI encourages and recommends IDRC to remain flexible and supportive of social networking projects that are challenged by a rapidly changing digital environment as evidenced by Barza running on two different online platforms (first drupal then wordpress). Linked to this, FRI also recommends that IDRC recognize that not all deliverables committed to at the outset of a project make sense given ever-evolving development of technology and needs on the ground.
- IDRC should provide more regular learning events related to creating social networking sites (possibly through online webinars for sharing knowledge across online platforms and by encouraging different online platform creators to keep sharing knowledge and highlight lessons learned as well as failures)

Future Plans

Farm Radio International plans to continue enhancing Barza going forward. We have already carried out several activities to help ensure that we are able to develop Barza in a way that responds to African broadcasters’ needs and realities. One of the challenges we face is ensuring that we have adequate funding to support these activities.
Revisiting the logic model, activities, outputs and inputs

In light of the lessons learned from the Barza project, key FRI staff involved in Barza met in April 2014 to rework the Barza logic model, activities, outputs and inputs. This meeting was facilitated by Archana Bhatt who carried out the Barza external evaluation and who has a lot of experience with results-based management.

We are still working on finalizing the Barza logic model. However, some key points that came up in our meeting were:

- Access by broadcasters to barza.fm is only one part. We need to ensure that the access is effective. For example, several broadcasters reported frustration with logging into Barza – one way around this is to place less emphasis on logging in and more emphasis on how to use resources available on Barza without logging in. Another way is to encourage people to login via their Facebook login since many broadcasters in Africa are using Facebook.

- Barza should support FRI staff and broadcasters involved in the different program areas at Farm Radio International. The current focus has been on the Resources for Broadcasters Program, and to some extent the Training Program. Going forward we should include features that support the Impact Program and ICT Program areas. By broadening the focus of Barza to include all program areas of FRI more FRI staff will be encouraged to use Barza to connect with broadcasters they work with. This will also increase the amount of broadcasters accessing Barza.

- Not all features/activities/services need to take place directly on Barza. For instance we have learned that having too many features on the Barza site slows it down. Barza would be a place that people would go to and then by clicking on a link to participate in a discussion group it might take them to another site that has well-developed discussion groups. The Barza user would not be aware of this since FRI would work to integrate the site within Barza.

- Branding Barza is important.

- Developing a marketing and communications strategy is important for Barza. We need to use multiple ways to inform people what is new on Barza – email, Facebook, mobile voice and sms messages etc.

- We need to focus Barza activities and develop a good plan for carrying them out – by trying to get Barza to offer too many things we risk sacrificing quality.

In coming months, the priority areas that FRI staff plan to work on are:

- Offering discussion groups on different topics relevant to broadcasters and small-scale farmers.

- Integrating the Farm Radio Weekly news service on Barza.

- Using Barza to market training opportunities – for instance the upcoming Farmer Program e-Course. Even though this course will be offered on a Moodle Platform, we will use Barza communication tools to advertise the course.

- Working on the e-Resource library, particularly ensuring that FRI scripts are easily accessed.
Surveys

Barza user survey

The online survey tool developed to survey existing Barza users in order to capture how Barza has accomplished the outcomes indicated in the logic model, also helped provide some direct feedback on which components were most appreciated by African broadcasters. For instance, users indicated that they particularly valued the on-line training module on VOICE, and the discussion group on agricultural value chains.

This feedback was particularly useful for FRI staff in helping us determine which features/activities we should focus on in the future.

Broadcasting partner automated voice survey

In 2014, Farm Radio International sent an automated voice survey to over 500 Africans’ mobile phones in more than 30 countries across Africa. These individuals are from organizations that we consider our broadcasting partners – radio organizations such as community radio stations, state broadcasters, private radio stations, and NGOs that work with radio stations. Farm Radio International currently has approximately 550 broadcasting partners in 38 countries across sub-Saharan Africa.

The survey was sent out in English and French. This survey was conducted using a service called VOTO Mobile operated by a company in Ghana. This was the first time FRI used this service to reach broadcasters across Africa. Of the 482 numbers called, 404 were correct and 170 individuals were able to answer at least one question. The results were logged automatically on the VOTO website. Multiple calls (up to 12) went out to people who did not pick up on the first time.

We asked broadcasters several questions related to Barza and helping us improve it in the future. We also asked broadcasters to leave us a voice message if they had any feedback and/or comments for Farm Radio International.

This recent automated phone survey of Farm Radio International broadcasting partners (which includes many Barza users) shows that:

- 85.9% of the 170 respondents have used Facebook
- 59.2% of the 152 respondents have visited barza.fm
- 63.9% of the 142 respondents have used the mobile application Whatsapp
- 89.3% of the 140 respondents indicated they would like us to contact them by mobile phone in the future
- 40.1% of the 137 respondents have a basic phone
- 30.7% of the 137 respondents have a phone with Internet
- 29.2% of the 137 respondents have a smartphone

This feedback is extremely useful since we know that we should create a Barza Facebook group to communicate with broadcasters about new features on the site. We can follow up with people
that have not been to barza.fm to encourage them to use the site. We can explore using Whatsapp to encourage more Barza interaction. In fact, in an effort to increase interaction between Barza members in Tanzania, field staff from the FRI’s Arusha office are have already experimented with a WhatsApp. WhatsApp would be another outlet (beyond Barza) to message broadcasters about activities happening on Barza.

We plan on gathering more mobile numbers going forward so that we can reach greater numbers of broadcasters by voice recordings in the future. This tool can be used not only to survey users but to inform them of new features and activities on Barza.

**Funding for Barza**

FRI has built in some funding for Barza for the 2014/15 fiscal year into a couple of projects that we successfully received funding for. This will enable us to:

- Offer a discussion group on nutrition (funding from Irish Aid)
- Work on integrating the Farm Radio Weekly news service on Barza (funding from the Canadian Auto Workers Social Justice Fund)
- Using Barza to market training opportunities – for instance the upcoming Farmer Program e-Course. Even though this course will be offered on a Moodle Platform, we will use Barza communication tools to advertise the course (funding from the Commonwealth of Learning)
- Contribute some staff time to coordinating Barza (funding from a couple Canadian donors that will support a small percentage of staff time)

We have also submitted a few other proposals to various donors. Should any of these proposals be successful we plan to offer some additional discussion groups to African broadcasters.

Funding from IDRC enabled key FRI staff to focus on developing Barza and coordinating Barza activities. Now that this funding has come to an end we need to identify new funding opportunities to ensure that adequate staff time is available to continue developing Barza and coordinating activities so that it responds to the needs of African broadcasters.
6.0 List of annexes

Annex A: Create Barza post

Annex B: FRW RSS feed

Annex C: Barza Weather Widget

Annex D: Using the VOICE tool to make good farmer programming

Annex E: Barza lite mobile navigation

Annex F: mobile Facebook sign-in

Annex G: An introduction to agricultural value chains

Annex H: How to conduct a focus group

Annex I: The role of radio in agricultural value chain approach

Annex J: What information do your farmer-listeners need

Annex K: FINAL Barza Evaluation Report IDRC