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Abstract

Using Radio to Provide Information and Advice to Communities Depending on Livestock in Somalia and Somaliland

Somalia is one of the poorest and least developed countries in the world. The UN has estimated life expectancy of only 47 years, the GNP as only US\$10 and the infant mortality rate as being 211. 69% of the population do not have access to clean water and the literacy rate is only 36% (14% for females).

Throughout the past 15 years of civil war the two key cornerstones of the economy in Somalia have been the remittances from the Somali Diaspora and income from the livestock sector. The Livestock sector is managed predominantly by nomadic, pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities. There are many small isolated communities of under two hundred men, women and children. The vast majority of adults in these communities are uneducated and illiterate and children, especially girls, rarely if ever go to school.

Given the ongoing conflict, the poverty and the lack of infrastructure, traditional methods of agriculture outreach to help train and educate families dependent on livestock have had very limited success. The BBC World Service Trust, in co-operation with Africa Educational Trust (AET), through a grant from the European Commission, has recently launched a new radio-based project to help provide training and information for men and women involved in the livestock sector in Somalia and Somaliland. The Project involves weekly radio broadcasts, radio listening groups and learning activities organized by a trained local (community-based) facilitator. Over three years 60,000 people are expected to take part in the listening group activities with perhaps a further million people listening to the broadcasts. This paper looks at some of the difficulties and constraints the project planners have encountered in designing a programme to reach and be of benefit to as many people as possible in these different communities.

Introduction:

AET experience in Somalia

The Africa Educational Trust has been working in Somalia and Somaliland for over a decade. The Trust has implemented and managed a range of programmes, most of which are focused on promoting literacy and providing access to education and skills training for young people who are unable to enroll and attend formal schooling. The

majority of beneficiaries of those programmes (70%) are girls and young women. Current programmes include the Somali Distance Education for Literacy (SOMDEL) project. This is a joint AET/ BBC World Service Trust project which uses radio programmes, specially developed student and teacher printed materials and face to face teaching. So far, over sixteen thousand people have successfully completed the courses, passed the final examination and have been awarded literacy certificates. A further eleven thousand are currently following the Level 1 course. Through a range of other projects the Trust has, over the past eight years, providing access to literacy, education and skills training for at least another fifteen thousand people.

The BBC –AET Livestock Project

AET and the BBC World Service Trust are currently working together to develop and implement a new project to help improve the lives of pastoralists and others whose livelihoods depend on livestock. The project is funded by the European Commission and is designed to help pastoralists improve the health of their animals, their livestock practices and their marketing skills. It will also help them to address some of the social, economic and political barriers they face, for example the current ban on the import of Somali animals into Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States. The Project will use weekly radio programmes broadcast on the BBC World Service. There will also be a network of Radio Listening groups across the whole of Somalia and Somaliland. Every radio broadcast will include activities for the groups to carry out after the broadcast. There are no plans to produce written materials for the listeners.

The Role of the BBC

The BBC World Service Trust (WST) is the leading partner in the project. WST is responsible for the design, production and broadcasting of the radio programmes. Most of the WST staff involved are Somalis based in Somalia and Somaliland. They are responsible for working with pastoralists, livestock workers and local organizations to select the content of the radio programmes. Each weekly programme will be linked with at least two of the main themes and will also include information about livestock prices in different markets. Each programme will include interviews with pastoralists and livestock workers from different regions of Somalia and Somaliland.

The Role of AET

AET has been asked to conduct a baseline survey of a sample of 600 listeners or potential listeners of the project. This involves ten trained local researchers visiting up to one hundred communities dependent on livestock and conducting structured interviews with a cross section of the people in each community. The survey is being carried out during September and October (2005).

AET has also established a network of 700 Radio Listening groups. These listening groups will cover all regions where there are communities dependent on livestock. Each listening group will be coordinated by a local facilitator. Facilitators are unpaid but receive training. During the training they will receive a small Daily Subsistence Allowance (DSA). Through its existing network of outreach workers in Southern

Somalia, Somaliland and Puntland AET will also monitor the progress of the listening groups and the project itself and will provide feedback to the BBC.

Design and Implementation

Every development project tends to be a compromise between (1) the community or beneficiaries' needs, (2) the donors policies and strategies, (3) the implementing organization's experience and capability and (4) the reality of the situation on the ground.

In theory a project should start from and be based on the communities' needs. In practice, this rarely happens. A donor will have taken years to develop its policies and strategies and they are likely to remain in place for a further period of years. Within those strategies there will be funding priorities, proposal guidelines, tendering processes and budgetary and reporting criteria as well as financial years and application deadlines. For the vast majority of applications, donors require a detailed proposal to be submitted before any funding can be provided, so normally the programme's aims, objectives and even many of the activities will have to be specified before a detailed consultation process will be funded. Most reputable organizations do conduct their own consultations and needs analysis but these have to be funded out of their own budgets and so are rarely as extensive or as thorough as they should be.

Without a detailed consultation (and sometimes even with one) it is difficult to foresee all of the problems and constraints that are likely to be encountered. For example, some years ago, detailed consultations and discussions were conducted when AET devised its Women's Village Education (WOVE) Project in Somaliland. The original proposal envisaged trained female teachers traveling daily from the main towns to teach in rural villages. It was established in advance that taxis did travel from the towns to the villages. However, only at the implementation stage was it discovered that taxis did not travel out of the towns in the morning. In the mornings taxis traveled into towns. They only traveled out from the towns in the evenings. If the trained teachers were to travel from towns to villages they would have to spend almost every night away from home.

In common with almost every other project the new BBC /AET Livestock project has encountered a number of initial difficulties. One problem lay with defining who the intended beneficiaries would be. The majority of people will simply listen to the radio programmes, a smaller number will be involved with the radio listening groups. The Project is called the Somali Livestock Project and the beneficiaries are described as people whose livelihoods depend on animals. Many Somalis seem to assume that this automatically means the Reer Miyi, or the "nomads" as they are referred to in English. The initial perception, therefore, was that the project and the radio programmes were intended for nomads and not for people who live in villages (Reer Tuulo). Even though in many villages people depend totally or mainly on livestock. In the Somali, the people in these villages are not considered as being Reer Miyi but they do depend on animals.

A second difficulty was that if the Reer Miyi truly were nomadic, they were likely to travel in small family groups and it was unlikely they would form weekly listening groups of twenty to thirty listeners. Similarly it would be difficult if not impossible for

facilitators, who were not themselves Reer Miyi to meet with them on a weekly basis and organize the follow-up activities.

From discussions with local partners and other NGOs such as PENHA, VetAid and Candlelight and from interviews with herders and villagers it became clear that while people did travel with their herds many, probably the majority, were not fully nomadic. People tended to stay in their home village as long as they could and as long as water and pasture allowed them to stay. When this wasn't possible often it was only the young men who left with the camels and cattle. The older men, the women and the children remained in the village with the goats and sheep. In other cases, however, the whole village might move to another location and set up a temporary settlement there. However, even then they were likely to return to the home village as soon as there was water and pasture there.

A further difficulty arose over what should be the role and responsibilities of the facilitators for these listening groups. Given the low literacy and education rate amongst nomadic, rural and pastoralist communities in the region, it was unlikely that we would be able to recruit teachers or even enough literate people to reach these communities on a weekly basis. The project would need to be able to use and develop a methodology that could make effective use of facilitators who were illiterate, people who may know no more about the content of the broadcasts than the other listeners. The role of the facilitator, therefore, was to simply organize the listening group and to ensure that the group could listen to the radio programme and then carry out the activities suggested during the broadcast. The facilitators were to have no teaching role. During an initial consultation workshop with a range of organizations involved in working with people who depended on livestock it was recommended that facilitators should be selected from people who lived and were based in "pastoralist villages".

This recommendation was followed. However, this has meant that there may be no listening groups amongst truly nomadic communities. The project organizers recognize this limitation and the trainers have been instructed to encourage facilitators to include as many people as possible from nomadic communities in their listening groups, for example when they come to the villages to water their animals, to sell milk or to buy goods. It is however, still a concern.

Progress to Date

The project started in July (2005) and the first radio programme was broadcast in September. Three master trainers, one from Somaliland, one from Puntland and one from Southern Somalia were trained. They each trained ten trainers from their own region. Each trainer has subsequently trained 24 facilitators from different locations in their region. We are still waiting on confirmation that 700 listening groups have been established. However, there is already evidence that groups have been formed and that a wide range of people in both rural and urban environments are listening to the broadcasts.

Constraints Still to be Overcome

There are still a number of difficulties and constraints to be overcome, most of them relate to the level of funding available and the material and financial inputs needed. Facilitators are not paid for their work. They are asked to spend between thirty minutes and an hour each week managing and facilitating the group. The only financial incentive they receive is the small DSA they receive during their training. While many are currently willing to donate their time they may not be willing to continue over the full three years of the programme.

To try to overcome this problem we are encouraging teachers from the AET/BBC SOMDEL Literacy Project to also become facilitators. However, even under the literacy project the teachers do not receive salaries but they do receive a significantly greater amount of incentive during training and they also have the status of being “teachers”. Not all facilitators can come from the SOMDEL Programme but we hope that those who do will see their involvement as adding to their status in the community and encourage them to remain with both programmes.

A second constraint encountered is that the project does not provide the listening groups with radios. It was felt by the donors that there were likely to be sufficient radios available in the areas where listening groups were to be established. While this may be true there is concern that the radios are likely to be suitable only for family use and not suitable for larger group listening, especially if the group is listening outdoors.

To overcome this problem the BBC and AET are working together to obtain radios for every listening groups, radios which will be suitable for group listening out of doors.

Plans for the Future

Baseline Survey

To obtain a clearer understanding of who the listening audience is, AET and the BBC are carrying out a “baseline survey” of six hundred listeners, or potential listeners, across Somalia, Somalind and Puntland. Ten researchers have been trained to use a structured interview format and conduct interviews with a cross section of people in approximately one hundred communities where people depend on livestock. The results will be available in December (2005).

Education for young people

The baseline survey of 600 listeners will provide detailed information about the literacy and educational levels of young people whose families depend on livestock. However, from small initial surveys which have been conducted it is clear that the majority of children and young people in these communities are not literate and do not have access to any form of education. In three villages visited which had a total population of almost

five hundred people, there were no schools. Only one child, a boy, was known to attend school regularly. No girl from any of the three villages had ever been to school.

Over the next year AET will investigate if it will be possible to help young people, in the areas where there are listening groups, to gain access to at least some form of relevant basic education. We will use the results of the baseline survey to work with local stakeholders and identify ways in which young people from these communities could be supported for relevant literacy, basic education and skills courses. In the following years we would hope to pilot and evaluate a number of different methods and approaches before then working with partners to implement those that work best.