

Chapter 2

Integration of ICTs in Radio Programs (II– RP) for Environmental Awareness for Peasant Farmers of Rural Zambia

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ABSTRACT

The radio was the most and only reliable media capable of disseminating remedial information for methods of curing and preventing the outbreak of animal and crop diseases. However, this mode of media faced the challenges of majority of peasant farmers not owning radios, and as a result, they did not access such services. In addition, the distance among the peasant farmers hindered people sharing such resources. Nevertheless, the mushrooming owning of mobile phones by the majority of peasant farmers made information sharing possible. It was in view of that that the integration of ICTs on radio programs, in this work abbreviated as II-RP, was envisaged to disseminate remedial information to peasant farmers in remote areas of Zambia. The II-RP, a mobile built system, allowed farmers and agriculture officers to share the awareness information and sensitization of methods of farming.

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INTRODUCTION

The Integration of ICT's on Radio Programmes, in this work abbreviated as II-RP is envisaged to disseminate remedial information to peasant farmers in remote areas of Zambia. Such information is vital to alert farmers and to quickly apply necessary technology for preventive measures. The II-RP architecture is demonstrated in Figure 1 and it has the following functional components: SMS Service Provider, Mass Media, NAIS Core, Commuter, and Wireless.

Currently the Radio, Television, Newspaper and Newsletter are media channels used by National Agriculture Information Service (NAIS) to disseminate information to farmers. The Radio is the mostly used media channel to disseminate information to framers. Existing wireless cellular networks that have been installed by Mobile Service Providers are utilized by the Mobile System. The major mobile service providers in Zambia are Airtel, Mobile Telecommunications (MTN) and Zambia Telecommunications (ZAMTEL).

Statement of the Problem

The major problems that affect the rural farming industry are as follows: first the outbreak of animal and crop diseases; second, the plague of insects that cause a lot of damage to the crops; third, lack of farming skills; and fourth, lack of information on the rainfall patterns. From these outlined problems, the peasant farmers do not have remedial and preventive information to combat such hazardous circumstances. They have very little means of communicating to the National Agriculture Information Service (NAIS), an organization which has farming experts such as the District and Provincial Agriculture Information Officers (DAIO/PAIO, respectively). These trained officers are employed to give peasant farmers valuable information across all kinds of farming activities. However, the major communication means which is through radio is not very effective to reach out majority of the rural community who cannot utilize such facilities due to inadequate radio frequencies and coverage. Only a few remote areas can access radio coverage and be able to listen to the agriculture programmes where farmers are educated on how to manage animal

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