



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

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Liberian Radio Offers Creative Solutions to Rural Problems

In rural [Liberia](#), information typically moves through verbal communication. People living in rural areas do not usually write letters, read the newspaper, or watch television due to high illiteracy and lack of infrastructure. As a result, community radio stations are quickly becoming the simplest way to relay information to isolated communities.

There are over 40 community radio stations throughout the country, some of which broadcast to as many as 200,000 people. Since the Liberian conflict ended in 2003, donor support has increased the capacity and financial sustainability of the major rural community radio stations and created an opportunity to deliver important messages via the airwaves.

In today's Liberia, the agriculture sector represents over 60 percent of the nation's GDP, however there are only 130 registered agribusinesses, a mere two percent of all registered businesses.

Improved radio stations have created the perfect medium to reach rural listeners with agriculture and community development messages. In 2013, the USAID Food and Enterprise Development Program began harnessing both the medium and the message to help smallholder farmers. The program is part of [Feed the Future](#), the U.S. Government's global hunger and [food security](#) initiative.

As part of its mandate to strengthen the agriculture extension delivery system, USAID has worked with 27 community radio journalists from 14 radio stations to promote the farming sector, agribusiness, and increase communication among radio listeners. The USAID program provided journalists with training to reach a larger audience involved with agriculture through community radio platforms.

"We can't rely on these radio stations to replace agriculture extension delivery, but they play a major role in notifying farmers about program information as well as best practices," explains Doe Adovor, USAID Food and Enterprise Development Extension Specialist.

'Soil, the Bank' Debuts on KR 94.5

Chester Dolo, 26, never set out to become a journalist. In fact, he is studying business management at the Liberian International Business College in Ganta, Northern Liberia. But he has kept his day job at the Kergheamahan Radio station because jobs aren't easy to come by in his hometown.

After graduating from high school in 2007, Chester quickly rose through the ranks of the community radio station. He started as a broadcaster, moved to senior reporter, then to program manager, and finally to station manager. Chester has made a name for himself on the Ganta radio station and it has much to do with his reading and speaking skills.

"My father's a reverend and he made me read scriptures at church every Sunday because I could read out loud," he explains.

KR 94.5—as it is known—gives the people of Ganta and the surrounding areas plenty of talk radio, especially politics, culture, and the weekend's football results. The community station was born in 2004 after the Liberian conflict but never broadcasted news and information about agriculture, the main livelihood of the majority of the listeners. Now, Chester is changing the radio's programming.

A USAID training event emphasized agriculture issues and allowed journalists to work in groups and demonstrate their skills and creativity to create their first agriculture-based program. When the 10-day training ended, journalists returned to their radio stations armed with a new outlook on the role of agriculture and agribusiness in community radio.

"Prior to that [training], we didn't think much about farmers as listeners. The radio is one way to make them see farming as a business and not just survival. We can share a lot of useful information," Chester explains. "Liberians spend \$200 million

every year on importing rice. We journalists can create awareness towards growing our own rice for consumption.”

Every Wednesday night at 7 p.m. and Friday morning at 9 a.m. the people in and around Ganta tune in to “Soil, the Bank”. The 30 minute program takes listeners to the farms in Nimba County to learn about the challenges and problems of farming in Liberia. Listeners hear interviews with farmers as well as USAID experts on rice, cassava, vegetable farming and animal husbandry. The program also involves agribusiness owners like fertilizer and pesticide suppliers to provide listeners a chance to ask questions. Experts also share ideas on finding markets for the region’s produce.

“A lot of farmers talk about being cheated by wholesalers. Now new buyers who want to find farmers and good produce can use the community radio to transmit their messages,” Chester explains.

After its first month on the air, “Soil, the Bank” is slowly gaining recognition. And as farmers and farm suppliers become more aware of the program, the radio station expects to sell more advertisements. Chester doesn’t plan to run the radio station his entire life, but if agriculture-focused radio can become successful, journalism might one day become a well-paid job.

This post originally [appeared](#) on the USAID blog. [Learn more](#) about Feed the Future in Liberia.