

## FARMERS VOICE RADIO

### Six steps to developing a content plan for your participatory radio programme



## Introduction

*This resource has been developed with the support of the [Work and Opportunities for Women \(WOW\) Programme](#) funded by UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. It is based on learning from implementation of the project, [Enabling Adoption of Climate Smart Agriculture by Women Tea Smallholders in Western Kenya](#), in partnership with [Twinings](#), the [National Organisation of Peer Educators \(NOPE\)](#), [Sireet Outgrowers Empowerment and Producer company](#) and [Sasini Tea](#).*

This document is intended to be used alongside a suite of Farmers' Voice Radio [resources](#) that provide step-by-step guidance to planning and implementing a Farmers' Voice Radio (FVR) programme. As articulated in those resources, the main stages in this process are:

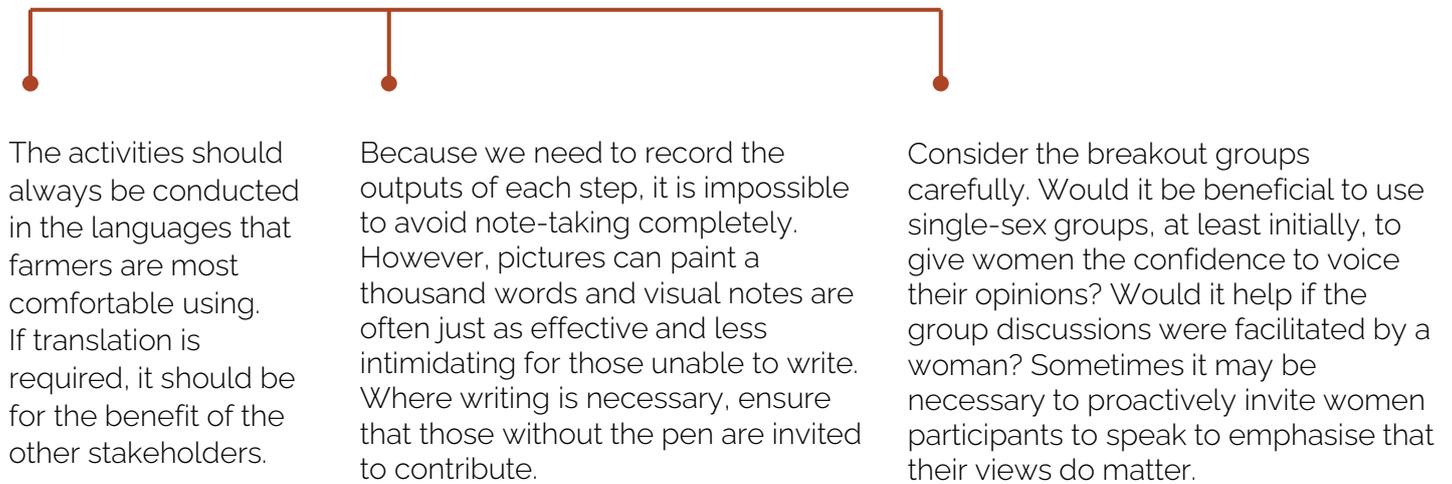
- 1 [Formative research](#) – establishing whether FVR is the right approach for you, and understanding the communications landscape in which you will be working from the perspective of your target audience.
- 2 [Identifying actors](#) – recognising the key people and organisations who will be involved in your FVR programme and articulating their respective roles.

- 3 [Resource planning](#) – identifying the resources needed to implement your FVR programme and securing these.
- 4 [Establishing the Programme Reference Group](#) – setting selection criteria and engaging the small group of farmers whose discussions will generate the main content for your radio programme.
- 5 [Training and content planning](#) – a start-up workshop involving a cross-section of FVR programme stakeholders, including farmers, extension officers and other technical experts, supply chain representatives and radio station staff. This event provides training on the FVR approach and creates a space for stakeholders to co-develop content for the radio programme. The activities outlined in this document are designed to be undertaken in this workshop setting.
- 6 [Baseline setting](#) – gathering data from a sample of your target audience to establish current levels of knowledge and practice relating to the issues you wish to address, as well as to understand what they would most like to hear about in the FVR programme.
- 7 [Detailed programme planning](#) – working with the radio station partner to agree the recording and broadcast schedule, programme format, post-production process and promotional plan for the radio programme.
- 8 [Engaging wider stakeholders](#) – exploring sources of expertise on the topics identified in your radio programme content plan and how to use these to supplement Programme Reference Group members' own experience. One way to do this is to engage them in [developing topic briefing sheets](#) for the monthly programme recordings.
- 9 [Designing a listener feedback system](#) – establishing appropriate channels for the wider listenership to submit comments and questions about the radio programme, and a plan for how these will be responded to.
- 10 [Recording radio programme content](#) – planning and facilitating monthly Programme Reference Group meetings effectively.
- 11 [Monitoring, evaluation, and learning](#) – tools and approaches for understanding the reach and impact of your FVR programme.
- 12 [Sustainability](#) – exploring ways to ensure that your FVR programme and any benefits that it delivers endure beyond the project funding.

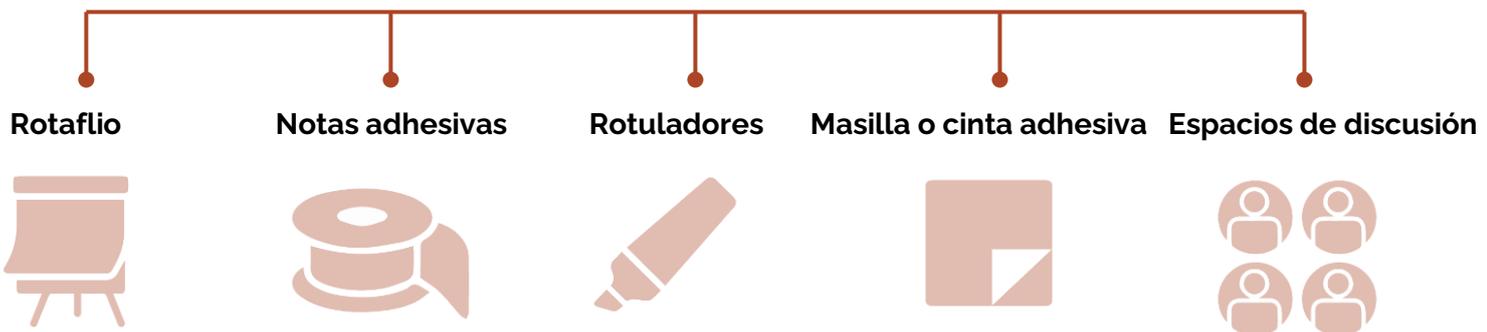
The [Farmers' Voice Radio journey overview](#) document provides more detail on each of these stages, and the [Farmers' Voice Radio ethics and approach](#) resource outlines the principles that underpin the FVR model, in particular the VOICES standards for effective farm radio programming developed by [Farm Radio International](#).

As mentioned above, the activities described in this guidance note are designed to be undertaken in a workshop setting with participation from a cross-section of Farmers' Voice Radio programme stakeholders, including farmers, extension officers and other technical experts, supply chain representatives and radio station staff. The order in which they are conducted is important, as each exercise builds on the previous one, culminating in a radio programme content plan that combines all outputs.

A note on inclusion: Full participation of farmers, including women, men and youth, is vital in ensuring that their realities and needs drive the process. Therefore, where language, literacy and gender dynamics risk limiting participation, deliberate efforts should be made to overcome these barriers. Think about the following points as you plan and implement the activities:



## Resources needed



A master slide deck taking workshop participants through these exercises is available on request from the [Farmers' Voice Radio team](#).

## Step 1: Defining the target audience

The nature of a mass communications medium such as radio is that we cannot control who listens to it. The likelihood is that it will reach thousands of people in many locations, of all ages, genders and lifestyles. But when we are planning our radio programmes it is essential that we always keep our target audience in mind so that we can tailor the content exactly to their needs.

As the first stage of designing your Farmers' Voice Radio project, you will already have undertaken some formative research to gain a deeper understanding of the people you want to reach with your radio programme and whether participatory radio is the right medium to bring about the change you'd like to see. As the farmers and other stakeholders will be co-creators of the radio programmes, it is important that they also have the opportunity to work as a group to develop a shared understanding of the realities of the people they would like to listen.

## Instructions to participants: .....

- Close your eyes and try to picture the typical listener of our radio programme. Are they a man or a woman? How old are they? Do they have children? What are their living circumstances like? Are they in an urban or rural environment? What language(s) do they speak? What kind of education have they had? What is their daily routine like? What are their main livelihood activities? Are they able to access important services and resources, such as healthcare, schools, water, transportation etc? How and when do they relax and enjoy themselves?
- Open your eyes and in small groups, discuss and compare the pictures you had in your minds. Try to pull out the common threads and draw (or write, if you prefer) a portrait of the typical listener that we are trying to reach with our radio programme, bringing out as much detail as possible and highlighting any gender or age-related differences.



When finished, ask a representative of each group to present their sketch in plenary and discuss the commonalities and distinctions. Where you have been working in single-sex groups, it may be interesting to explore the reasons for any differences. The purpose is not to reach one definitive description but to start to develop a deeper understanding amongst participants of what makes our target audience tick. Make sure to keep these sketches somewhere visible throughout the rest of the activities.

## Step 2: Understanding the specific challenges facing the target audience

Now that we have defined the target audience, we need to build up a picture of the challenges they face that could be addressed by the radio programme – either in terms of the way it is designed (for example, to overcome the issues of time poverty and lack of control over assets such as radios, commonly experienced by women farmers), or in terms of the content that will be delivered (for example, to give listeners a better understanding of how international commodity markets operate globally).

## Preparation for facilitators: .....

Using knowledge gathered through your [formative research](#) and ongoing work with the target audience, facilitators should list in advance the key challenges that they expect to emerge and prompt for these if they are not raised by the groups. Although every context is different, there are some common themes across Farmers' Voice Radio programmes:

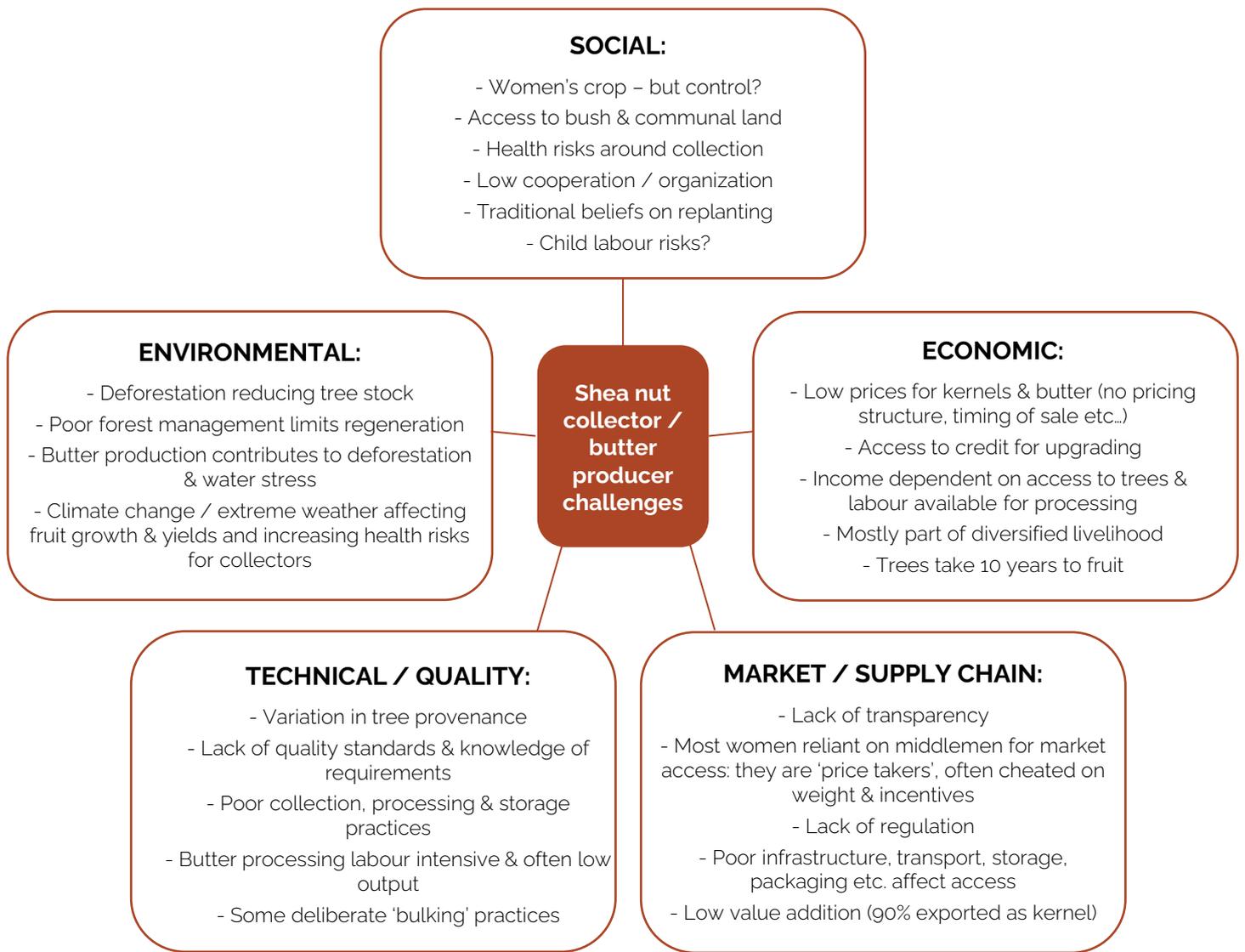
- **Social challenges** – inclusion of women and other disadvantaged groups; access to and decision-making over land, other resources and benefits; access to education and literacy; farmer cooperation/joint marketing; access to health services and poor health outcomes; time poverty and domestic burden.
- **Environmental challenges** – climate change/extreme weather events (noting gender-specific impacts); deforestation; soil erosion and poor soil fertility; access to water; dependence on chemical inputs.
- **Economic challenges** – low, volatile prices; access to credit for investment; lack of control over income, particularly for women.
- **Technical/quality challenges** – knowledge of good agricultural and post-harvest practices; dealing with pests and disease; access to inputs, appropriate technologies, equipment and storage; access to extension services.
- **Market/supply chain challenges** – access to market information and prices; lack of transparency in the supply chain; reliance on middlemen/traders; poor infrastructure, transport and storage; lack of value addition.

## Instructions to participants:

- Back in the same small groups, consider the challenges facing the typical listener that you sketched out in the previous exercise. These challenges could be related to the production and marketing of the crops they grow on their farms, or more general, for example relating to the impacts of climate change or gender inequality.
- Note down each challenge (or draw a symbol for it) on an individual sticky note. Keep going until you have a large pile of sticky notes and have run out of ideas!

Once everyone has finished, invite a representative from each group (a different person to last time) to come and stick their notes on a piece of flipchart paper, reading them out as they do this. Try to group the challenges into themes as you go along, moving the sticky notes around into distinct categories and combining any duplicates. In the end you should have something that looks a bit like these examples from Ghana and Uganda:





Give participants an opportunity to review the groupings and make sure they are happy before moving on. Make sure to keep these groups of challenges somewhere visible throughout the rest of the activities.

## Step 3: Setting objectives for the radio programme

So far, we have defined the target audience for our radio programme and explored some of the challenges they are facing. Farmers' Voice Radio can help to address these challenges by:

- Creating radio content collaboratively with farmers, producer organisations, extension officers and other technical experts, buyers and other stakeholders.
- Sharing timely, relevant, appropriate, and practical knowledge and information, accessibly and at scale.
- Encouraging changes in attitudes and behaviours, and adoption of improved practices through shared and recognizable stories of success.
- Facilitating connections with stakeholders and local services and making supply chains more transparent.

## Instructions to participants: .....

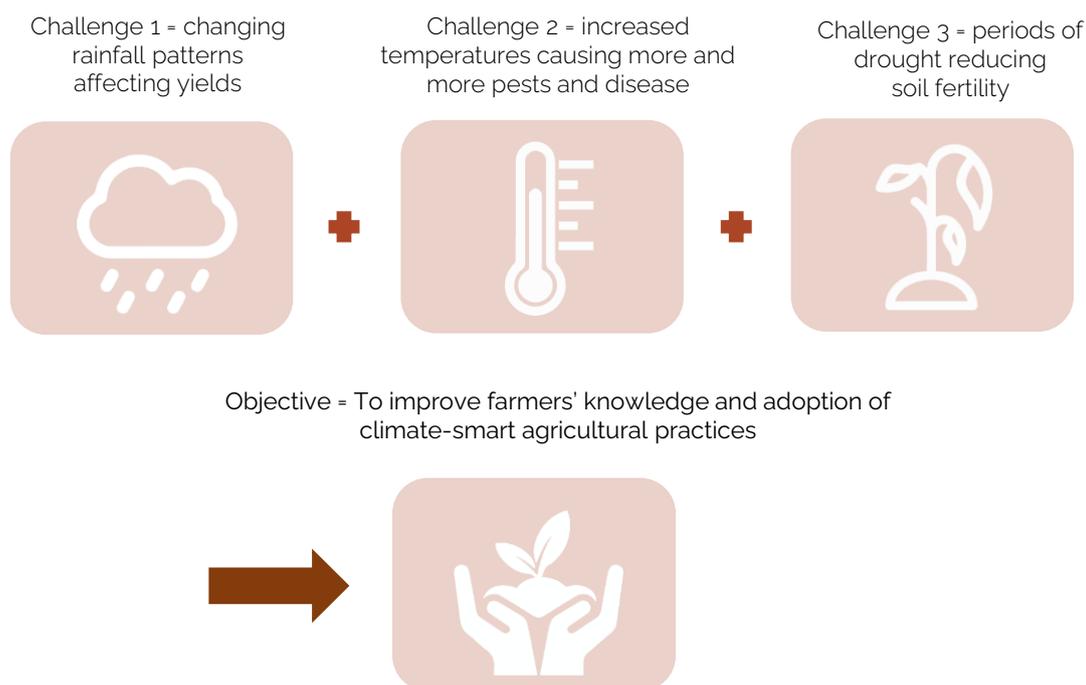
- Once again in small groups (you may wish to mix them up this time), discuss and agree what are the most pressing challenges facing the target audience that could be resolved by filling a knowledge or information gap, or supporting a change in attitude, behaviour or practice.
- Turn these prioritised challenges (or groups of challenges) into a 3-5 high-level objectives that directly address these challenges. It is possible to have a single objective that addresses more than one challenge.
- Ensure that the objectives are gender-aware and gender-responsive.
- Ensure that the objectives are specific, measurable and realistic to accomplish within the programme timeframe.

It may be helpful to talk through some practical examples at this stage to assist participants with crafting the objectives. Here are a couple:

**1.** If you have identified a number of challenges around farmers' vulnerability to extreme weather events, you may wish to set an objective 'to improve farmers' knowledge and adoption of climate smart agricultural practices'.

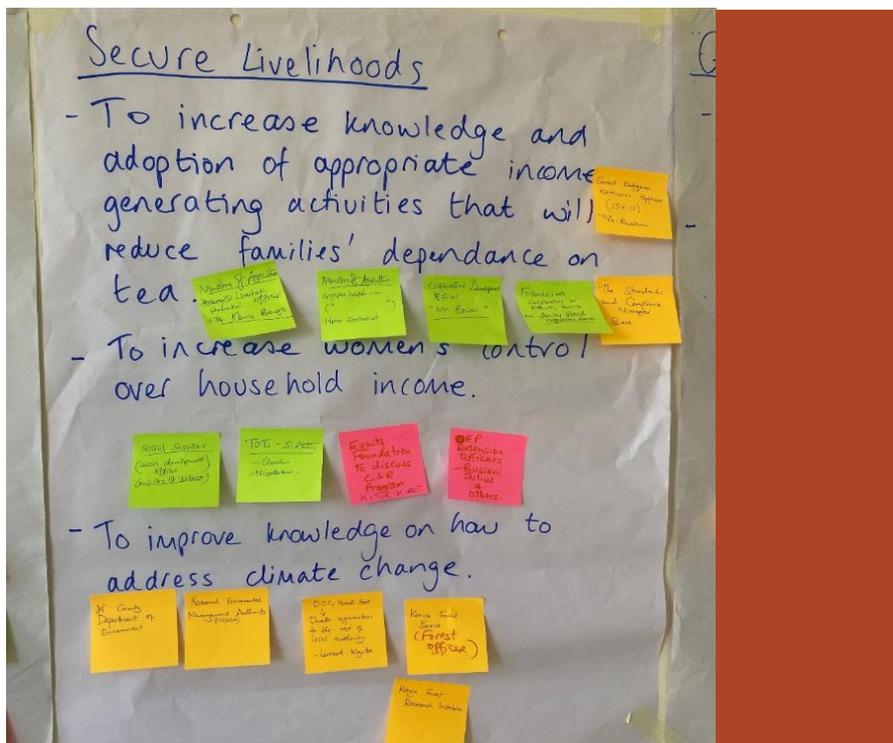
**2.** In response to women's lack of economic independence and control over family income, you might aim 'to increase female farmers' knowledge and adoption of appropriate supplementary income generating activities'.

## Developing programme objectives – example:



When all groups have settled on their 3-5 objectives, ask each in turn to read theirs out and note them on a flipchart or screen as they do this. Encourage constructive challenge amongst participants to objectives that appear overly ambitious in terms of scope or timescale, or are not specific enough.

It is likely that there will be considerable duplication between each group's objectives. However, it is also likely that you will end up with more than five in total. In this case we suggest a voting exercise to reduce the final list to 3-5 priority objectives that all participants agree on. Write this final list on a flipchart and stick it somewhere visible throughout the rest of the activities.



## Step 4: Developing a seasonal calendar

Earlier in the Farmers' Voice Radio journey, we introduced the [VOICES standards](#) for effective farmer radio programming. Farmers' Voice Radio programmes aim to give farmers the information they need, when they need it. Therefore, ensuring each topic is broadcast at the most appropriate time is really important.

### Preparation for facilitators:

If you don't know it already, you may wish to do some research in advance about the annual activity cycle for the particular crop(s) that your target audience is engaged in producing so that you can support participants with this exercise. It is important to recognise, however, that communities can have quite localised agricultural calendars due to geographical differences in seasonal weather patterns as well as other non-weather-related factors such as social customs and festivals. This is why it is important to support participants to develop their own calendar.

### Instructions to participants:

We are now going to develop our own seasonal calendar specific to this region, the crops we are focussing on and our target audience. Think about the following: What are the general weather patterns over the year? What and when are the main activities relating to the production and marketing of our focus crop(s)? What other crops do people grow? What livestock do they keep? And what other activities dominate people's time or affect their wellbeing at different times of year?

In small groups, develop a seasonal calendar as follows<sup>1</sup>. You may use symbols or words, whichever you feel most comfortable with:

- Draw a line at the top of the flipchart to show time and mark along it smaller time periods using the local names for months or parts of seasons. Make sure that there are enough time periods to cover the whole crop cycle.
- Underneath the timeline, write or indicate with symbols the usual dominant weather conditions in that period (bearing in mind that, due to climate change, these 'seasons' are generally shifting).
- Draw rows on the left margin of the flipchart; enough for the main focus crop(s) and all the other crops, livestock and other livelihood activities typically engaged in. Dedicate each row to one of these activities.
- Then, for each crop or activity, draw a line from when the first action for that crop or activity happens (e.g. land preparation) to when the last action for the crop happens (e.g. marketing).
- Underneath the crop/activity line, define when each main action (e.g. planting, weeding...) is done using words or symbols.
- Use symbols or words to indicate who (women, men, or youth) is most involved in each activity.
- At the bottom add another line for other significant events or trends that might affect farming activities or livelihoods, for example school holidays, festivals, malaria season, association registration, AGMs etc.



Continue until everyone is happy the calendar is complete, and then leave on display for other workshop participants to look at. If there are any significant differences between the calendars, have a discussion in plenary about why this might be.

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<sup>1</sup>This activity is taken from the field manual [Participatory Integrated Climate Services for Agriculture](#) (PICSA) written by LYF partner, The Walker Institute (p.13-14).

## Step 5: Identifying sources of expertise

As discussed in our resource on establishing [Programme Reference Groups](#), the farmer members of these groups are the main protagonists of the Farmers' Voice Radio programmes and the principal source of the content that is broadcast. The philosophy of Farmers' Voice Radio is to recognise and emphasise the generations of experience that farmers possess, and to provide a platform for this to be shared with others.

However, it is also true that research and technology is constantly creating new knowledge and tools, which for reasons already discussed smallholder farmers are not always able to access easily. Other stakeholders—for example, extension officers, researchers, government officials and supply chain actors, with experience and knowledge relevant to the subject matter—have an important role to play in ensuring that radio broadcasts remain accurate, current and comprehensive. The next step in planning your radio programmes is therefore to identify who, beyond the members of the Programme Reference Group, might be a source of input and expertise for your programmes, supplementing farmers' existing knowledge to achieve the agreed objectives.

There are two groups of resource people with slightly distinct roles:

**1.** Regular expert contributors, who provide frequent input to programme recordings by feeding into briefing sheets, attending Programme Reference Group meetings and/or answering listener questions. These are often field officers who already have a community-based role and are key members of the project implementation team.

**2.** Specialist contributors, who you might wish to involve occasionally to provide a different perspective or respond to a particular piece of listener feedback on a specific topic. Examples could be a researcher into a particular type of crop disease, a nutritionist or an international buyer. They may not always speak the local language and so you may need to think about translation.

**Preparation for facilitators:** .....

Referring to the objectives that have been agreed for your radio programme, split participants into the same number of groups as there are objectives and allocate one objective to each group. Write the objective in a circle in the middle of a piece of flipchart paper.

**Instructions to participants** .....

First, let's remind ourselves of the objectives that we have agreed for our radio programme.

Now, think about the objective on your flipchart and identify all the individuals, groups and organisations who could provide expertise that could help to achieve that objective. Add each of these to the flipchart in the form of a mind map or spokes coming off a wheel (see photo). Try to be as specific as possible, for example rather than just 'local government' write the level of government, the department and where possible the name of an individual.



Create a 'bus stop' space (i.e. a table with enough chairs for a small group to sit around) for each objective. Place one of the pre-prepared flipcharts plus some spare blank sheets at each 'bus stop'. Allocate a lead facilitator from the project implementation team to each 'bus stop' and distributed participants evenly across the groups, ensuring a mix of farmers and other stakeholders on each.

## Instructions to participants:

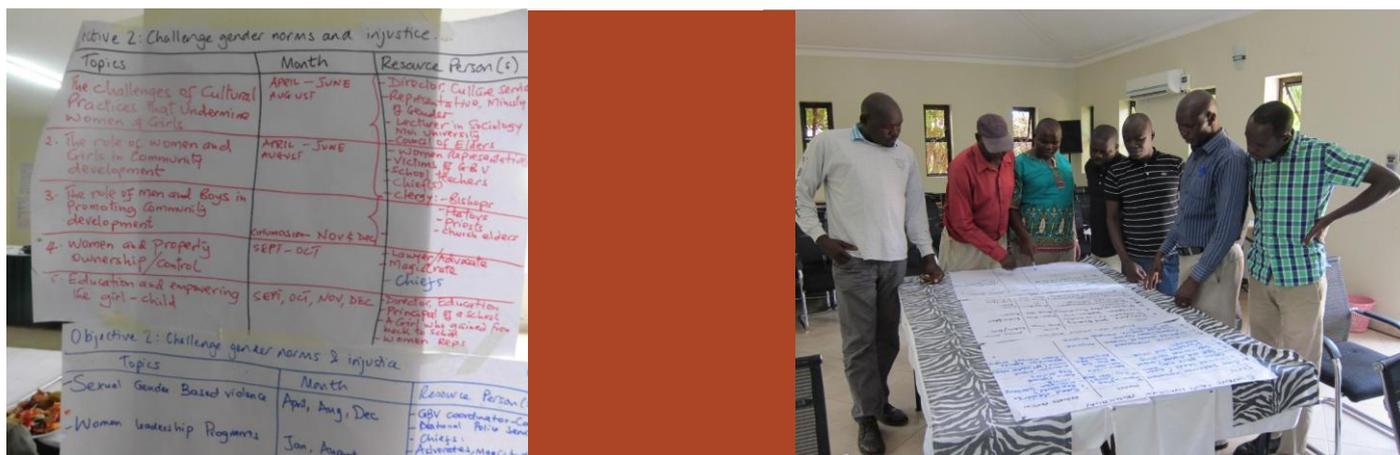
Referring to the outputs of the previous activities (the target audience, the challenges, the seasonal calendar and the sources of expertise), in your group develop a list of topics that could be discussed on the radio programme relating to the objective allocated to you. Note the month(s) that this topic would be most relevant to the target audience and the potential sources of technical expertise and good practice that could be drawn upon during recording.

Keep the following in mind during this activity:

It should be possible to deal comprehensively with each topic in a single 15-minute episode. Where topics are more complex or wide-ranging, they should be broken down into bite-sized chunks. For example, 'climate smart agricultural practices' could be disaggregated into a number of different topics such as mulching, cover crops, shade trees, terracing, water harvesting, improved seed varieties etc.

We are just listing the names of topics at this stage rather than the actual content that will be covered or practices that will be recommended. A greater level of detail will come later during the development of [topic-specific briefing sheets](#).

Once all groups have exhausted their first objective, circulate the groups around the other objectives giving them sufficient time to add comprehensively to what their colleagues have done, using fresh grids on the additional flipchart paper where necessary. When each group has had a chance to work on all objectives, give participants a few minutes to walk around and see the final versions.



Inform participants that the outputs of this activity will be entered into a Farmers' Voice Radio [programme plan template](#), which will guide the monthly radio recordings with the Programme Reference Group going forward. In addition, briefing sheets will be produced for each topic before each PRG meeting to ensure that farmers and other participants in the recording are clear about the key messages that we want to get across. The FVR programme content plan is intended to be a live document that can be adapted and added to throughout programme implementation, based on feedback from listeners and the Programme Reference Group.