

DIGITAL GREEN

Video-based learning within rural networks

Digital Green's video-enabled, knowledge-sharing work has smallholder farming communities at its core. Small farmers in low-income countries like India and Ethiopia typically make do with dated and abstract agricultural information in the traditional top-down extension scheme. The bottom-up approach leverages existing rural social networks such as women's self-help groups and farmer groups to create and share localized content on best practices related to farming, livelihood, health and nutrition through short videos using low-cost and durable technology.

Partnering with key government departments and NGOs that have functional extension systems at the community level as well as research organizations, Digital Green's video-enabled approach suitably complements existing extension services, while amplifying the impact of the development efforts.

A community video production team of four to six individuals in each district creates videos, averaging eight to ten minutes in length, which are screened for small community groups twice a week using battery-operated Pico projectors. The practices promoted through the videos are locally relevant and evidence-based, produced in the regional language. The casts of the short videos include local community members, thus ensuring the viewers' instant connection with the messaging. The video content is reviewed by subject matter experts before being finalized for screening. A trained village resource person mediates

A video screening.



a discussion around the video screenings by pausing, rewinding, asking questions, and responding to feedback. Regular verification visits are scheduled for measuring the effects of the screenings on adoption of actual practices.

The entire approach is designed to be responsive to community feedback, channelling data and feedback received from community members into the video production and dissemination processes and overall programme performance. Farmers' attendance at video screenings, interests, queries, comments and any changes in their behaviours as a result of adopting a new practice/technology are recorded by trained extension agents. The farmers share their thoughts on anything they choose, from the videos they would like to watch to the viewing experience to the challenges they face in their daily lives. This feedback is used to inform further iterations of the videos, and also of essential background processes such as storyboarding, the messaging, or even the way a screening is organized.

In a project site in Amethi district of the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, for instance, extension staff concluded the reason for farmers' reluctance to adopt a new way of treating seeds was because they didn't fully understand what the associated video described. On further examination, they found that it was a challenge for the farmers to remember the measurement for trichoderma, an important seed-treating agent, which was communicated in grams per unit volume of wheat. When the measurement unit was tweaked from grams to approximate teaspoon measurement, the farmers were able to understand and retain the concept.

Digital Green's near-real-time system of data management helps ensure that this data and feedback is collected, presented and analysed on a timely basis. The feedback is aggregated through a web-based management information system called Connect Online | Connect Offline or COCO, which functions even in locations with poor internet connectivity. The aggregated data helps in trend analysis, in performance assessment and in measuring the outcomes of the intervention.

From collecting individual farmer feedback to aggregating and visualizing the data, generating trends and making programmatic course corrections based on field-level observations, the Digital Green approach underscores the value of employing a bottom-up approach to designing community interventions. @

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