

# Pack 103, Item 10

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**How to serve your women farmers well**

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***Don’t I already serve both men and women farmers well?***

For decades, radio programs for farmers have mainly served the needs of male farmers. Male radio hosts have interviewed male experts and male farmers about crops and animals that men grow and raise.

Today we know that women do as much farm work as men on small-scale farms. They also feed the family and care for the young and old!

So women are essential to the survival and progress of family farms. It is therefore essential that radio programs which are meant to serve small-scale farmers serve the needs and interests of women farmers as well as men farmers.

Think about it. Are you really serving your women farmers well? Check the tips below and see how many you are already doing. And then implement all the tips you can!

***How will this guide help me serve my listeners better?***

- Women farmers will get the information they need to farm better.

- Women farmers will be able to voice their opinions on matters of importance to them.

- Women farmers will enjoy your program more.

- Male listeners will learn more about what is important to women farmers, and will have to take that into consideration.

***How will this guide help me produce and host better programs?***

- It gives me practical tips on how I can attract and serve women farmer-listeners and grow my audience.

- It gives me ideas on how I can encourage gender equality at my radio station.

***How do I get started?***

1) Give women farmers the respect they deserve.

2) Find out what is important to women, and cover it.

3) Broadcast at a time when women farmers can listen.

4) Encourage women farmers to speak on air.

5) Make sure your station is gender-responsive.

***Details***

**1) Give women farmers the respect they deserve.** As mentioned above, women do much of the work on small-scale farms. And they do it while looking after babies, children and elders. Their work is crucial to the success of the family farm. In everything you do—producing, interviewing, hosting—make sure that you convey a sense of respect for women who work hard, make important decisions for the health and welfare of their families, and are often bound by negative and restricting stereotypes. Lastly, be sure to recognize the diversity of socio-economic roles that both men and women play in their communities and homes.

For example:

- Identify women as farmers, not as the wives of farmers.

- Speak to them by name—they are individuals.

- Ask their opinions on important farming matters. They will surprise you with their insights.

- Showcase success stories that present a diversity of gender roles, for example, of women involved in growing cash crops or of men involved in decisions around family health.

**2) Find out what is important to women, and cover it.** Traditionally, we think that farming is mainly heavy duty work that only men can do. And that women look after the garden vegetables. But women are concerned about and involved in every part of farming that affects the health of their families, including the quantity and quality of their harvests. For example:

- how to improve the soil

- when to sell the cow

- how to improve crop nutrition

- how to borrow money wisely to increase plantings

- how to look after savings until required for family needs

Go to a village and have a meeting with women. Ask them what are the important issues they face in their farming work. Suggest some of the above topics so they won’t just think of “garden” issues. Listen carefully and, at the end, tell them what you have heard as their priorities. Then, back at the station, think of the best ways to cover these issues on air.

**3) Broadcast at a time when women farmers can listen.** You might be producing excellent programs that could be of great value to women farmers, but if you broadcast them at a time of day when most women cannot be near their radio, your work is wasted! When you visit villages and meet women, find out when they can listen to a farmer radio program. Ask men the same question. If both men and women farmers are available at the same time, you can broadcast one farmers’ program that serves both sexes. However, if women cannot listen at a time that is convenient for men, you will need to broadcast your farmers’ program twice a week, so that all farmers have access to it. Of course, this is complicated if your farmers’ program has a phone-in element, which must be live. In this case, you will need to insert a live phone-in portion into the phone-in part of the re-broadcast episode. Alternatively, you can produce two separate weekly farmers’ programs, one aimed at men farmers, the other at women farmers.

**4) Encourage women to speak on air.** In many cultures,women hold back and let men speak—for themselves, for their wives, and for their families. But times are changing. Women have the right to speak for themselves. And your communities will be healthier and safer and more productive if women’s voices are heard and considered equally with men’s in the discussion of important matters. Find out where women are comfortable speaking, perhaps in their homes, in their fields, or with a group of friends, and visit them there. In this guide you will find important things you can do to encourage women to speak on air. These include:

- seeking out women who are comfortable speaking on air

- interviewing women in groups

- allowing a woman to speak anonymously in special situations

**5) Make your station gender-responsive.** There are many ways that listeners can tell whether a radio station is gender-responsive or not. Check this list:

- Do you invite women to visit the station at a time of day when it is safe for them to travel?

- Do you provide washroom facilities for women and girls?  
- Does everyone at the station treat women and men with equal respect?

- Do listeners hear women broadcasters doing the same kinds of on-air work as men? (Radio stations do not generally have a good record on featuring women program hosts.)

- Does your station have a gender equality policy, and is it implemented and supported at all levels?

***Other points about serving women farmers well***

**- Use a separate phone-in line for women callers.** Typically,women have much less access to mobiles than men. So if men have 90% of the mobiles, then 90% of the calls to your phone-in program might be from men. However, if you have a separate line for women callers, you can alternate between the two lines and 50% of the callers who get to air will be women! While some cost is involved, and some screening to ensure that the women’s line is used exclusively by women, this is one of the most effective ways your program can make women feel that their comments and opinions are important.

**- Get out and meet women farmers.** Arrange transportation so you can get out to farming communities. Promote the visit on air so that you have good attendance. If you are a male broadcaster, bring a woman broadcaster with you. That might make some women feel more comfortable and open to speaking.

**- Seek out women who are comfortable speaking on air.** When you find a woman who is comfortable speaking on air, and who has important comments and opinions to make, get her mobile number and call her back to speak on other issues. This will embolden other women to speak out on future programs.

**- Interview women in groups.** If you interview one woman alone, that woman might feel intimidated because you are seen as the expert. However, if you interview a *group* of women, everything changes! The women feel some “strength in numbers.” And when one woman makes a comment, another will feel that she can take the issue deeper and make an even stronger comment. And then a third woman feels that she can build on what has been said and take the issue even deeper.

**- Provide a mobile phone to women in remote areas.** In some villages, no women have access to mobiles. If you can afford it, entrust one woman in that village with a mobile that any woman can use to call the station.

**- Feature the lives and experiences of women farmers.** We all like to hear about people like ourselves. How do other people overcome the challenges that we face? What gives them joy and sadness? Interview women farmers and let them tell their stories on air. This will encourage other women who face the same challenges.

**- Connect with women’s groups.** Find existing women’s groups and invite them to listen to your program and provide feedback about how well the program meets their needs as farmers. For more information on listening groups, click [***here***](http://www.farmradio.org/radio-resource-packs/pakage-99-cassava-the-post-harvest-value-chain/how-to-establish-and-manage-successful-radio-listening-groups/).

**- Use women’s farming words.** In some places, women have special words to describe certain crops and farming practices. These words are not always known to male broadcasters, or male experts—or even male farmers! Use the words that women use and understand.

**- Allow a woman to speak anonymously in special situations.** If a woman is being badly or unfairly treated in her work or in her home, but she fears bad consequences if she tells her story and is identified, help her to get her story to your listeners. As long as you know the name of the woman and trust her honesty, *you do not have to broadcast her name or any other identifying information.* You can disguise her voice by slowing it down or speeding it up a little with your computer. Or else *you* can tell her story, without naming her. You may find that by telling her story, you help a lot of other women tell similar stories from their lives. That will help them, and it will also help you, as a broadcaster, to begin to address the underlying issues. Remember that it may be important not only to disguise her voice and not announce her name, but to exclude all other identifying details.

**- Women farmers are experts too!** Some women farmers know as much about growing crops in their area as do the experts at the ag station. Interview these women on air. Their information will be valuable to all farmers, and their example will help all women to understand that women are valuable to farming.

**- Change how you interview male experts and male farmers.** If an expert talks about how vaccinating a cow will benefit a (male) farmer, ask how the vaccination will benefit the female farmer and the family. And make sure you find out whether the vaccination service is as accessible to women as it is to men.

**- Don’t just talk to women about their garden crops.** It is true that women do almost all of the kitchen garden work. But they are interested in all the farming that the family does. And they will have opinions about the best time to sell a cow or a crop, or the best way to enrich the soil, or whether it is wise to borrow money to buy inputs.

**- Teach women how to use a mobile phone.** Some women have never had the chance to learn numbers in school. Even if they have access to a mobile phone, they don’t know how to punch the right numbers. Develop a simple memory aid that teaches numbers in the women’s language. Test it with individual women to see if it helps. If it does, broadcast it regularly.

Here’s an example of a memory aid you could translate and turn into a rhyme. You may find a better one. Perhaps your mobile phone provider has a memory aid you can use. Play it during station breaks throughout the week. Ask women if they find it useful.

*With your mobile phone*

*You can talk to the world*

*You just need to know*

*Which keys to punch*

*Here they are, from left to right:*

*- top line: one two three,*

*- next line: four five six,*

*- third line: seven eight nine,*

*- bottom line: star zero number sign*

**- Have fun on air!** Remember that programs which are entertaining as well as informative will benefit your listeners. Find ways to include traditional and modern stories and songs in your program; this will attract both women and men.

**- Celebrate successes.** Every day, women farmers are overcoming obstacles and achieving great results in their farming work. Find out about those successes and celebrate them on air.

***Where else can I learn about serving women farmers well on radio?***

* AMARC-WIN International, 2008. *Gender Policy for Community Radio*. <http://www.amarc.org/documents/Gender_Policy/GP4CR_English.pdf>
* Adamou Mahamane, Fatouma Déla Sidi, and Alice Van der Elstraeten. 2014. *Guidelines for the production of gender responsive radio broadcasts*. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-aq230e.pdf>

***Definitions***

*Gender equity:* Gender equity means that women and men are given fair treatment, while respecting their differences. It requires specific measures to compensate for existing imbalances that put women or men at a disadvantage—for example: using a separate women’s phone line to ensure that the radio airs as many women’s voices as men’s voices, or modifying the time of a meeting or training opportunity to fit women’s schedules as well as men’s.

*Gender equality:* Gender equality means that women and men’s enjoyment of rights, opportunities, and life chances is not limited or discriminated against based on gender. Gender equality involves ensuring that the perceptions, interests, needs, and priorities of men and women are given equal weight and reflected in the roles, responsibilities, and decision-making processes in which people live and work—for example: women and men have the same rights and benefits in access to employment, training, promotion, working conditions, and salaries. Gender equality is strongly influenced by and connected with other social structures such as class, age, ethnicity, or sexual orientation, and efforts to achieve equality in these areas.

*Gender-responsive:* Gender-responsive means taking action to correct gender bias or discrimination in order to ensure gender equality and gender equity. It means that gender considerations will guide how programs are designed, that women’s and men’s specific needs and interests will be addressed, that stereotypes will be challenged, and that gender equality will be promoted.

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