

# Pack 111, Item 13

Type: Broadcaster-how-to

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**BH2 – Adapting Farm Radio International resources for radio broadcast**

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**Introduction**

***What is “adapting material for radio broadcast”?***

There is a huge amount of information and an enormous number of stories available in print, on the internet, in television, in film, and in other media. Some of this information and these stories can be adapted to create effective, entertaining, and informative radio broadcasts.

Since the invention of radio more than 100 years ago, there have been countless radio adaptations of films, literature, comic books, television programs, newspaper comics, theatrical plays, video games, and other forms.

In this BH2, we will focus on adapting information from print and online to the radio, including Farm Radio’s Resource Pack items (interview scripts, dramas, and backgrounders) and Barza Wire *Farmer stories.* But remember that many of the principles and practices discussed here are relevant for adapting any kind of content for the radio.

***How can adapting material for radio broadcaster help me serve my listeners better?***

* By adapting material from print and other media, you have a much wider variety of materials to keep your readers better informed and entertained.

***How can it help me produce better programs?***

* By covering a wider range of information and stories.
* By presenting different and perhaps less familiar aspects of important issues in your community.
* By showing how other communities have dealt with the issues that your community is dealing with.
* By suggesting different ways of presenting an issue—for example, dramas, two-host conversations, debates, poems, etc.

***How do I get started?*** (Learn more about these and other points in the *Details* section below.)

1. Translation
2. Location, names, and culture
3. Tips for adapting from different media
4. Do’s and don’ts of adapting existing material
5. Examples of adapting different kinds of FRI materials
   1. Backgrounders
   2. Dramas
   3. Interview scripts
   4. Barza Wire stories

**Details**

**Translation**

Perhaps the most basic and necessary way to adapt materials for the radio is to translate the material into your broadcast language.

To ensure that your translation is suitable for your audience and avoids changing important aspects of the original, here’s a tip: Consider asking one translator to translate the material from the original language into the language of broadcast. Then, ask a different translator to translate from the language of broadcast back into the original language. If the re-translated version differs from the original language version in significant ways, you may have a problem.

Translation is only the beginning of adaptation. You may want to change details, change the format, change the issues to make them more relevant for your local audience, and change many other things. Keep in mind that, if possible, it might be easier to adapt the material in these other ways first—and when those adaptations are complete, to then translate into your broadcast language.

**Location, names, and culture**

Another basic way of adapting materials for radio broadcast is to change the location(s) where the action takes place and the names of the persons involved. Keep in mind, however, that you must inform your audience that you are doing this. For example, you might tell your listeners that a particular segment of the program is adapted from original material that was set in (the original location), and involved people whose names have been changed to make the segment more relevant or suitable for your location.

Tips about changing names and locations:

* When you choose a new name to replace the original person’s name, do NOT use a name that is common in your area. There is a chance that your listeners will assume you are talking about someone they are familiar with. Instead, choose a very uncommon name.

**Tips for adapting from different media**

If you transcribed an interview from your program and then compared how it looks on the page with a text that is meant to be read silently, you would see that the two texts were structured very differently.

What this means is that, if you want to adapt printed material to the radio, you need to do a good deal of adaptation. Radio dialogue must be written in conversational English rather than the styles that you usually find on the pages of reports, novels, non-fiction books, or newspapers.

However, FRI resources such as interview scripts, dramas, and Barza Wire stories are designed to be “radio-friendly.” They are written in conversational language and are mostly free from jargon and technical terms. But even though FRI resources are radio-friendly, you will still need to read through them carefully and make adjustments where necessary, especially if you will be broadcasting them in a different language than the original English or French.

**Don’ts and do’s of adapting existing material**

1. Don’t present “phony” or simulated interviews:
   1. If you want to adapt an existing interview or news story, you must tell your listeners about any changes that you have made. You might make minor changes, like changing the names and locations. But if you present the interview—with different names and locations than the original interview—as if it really happened, that is fraudulent. You are presenting a fictional interview as if it’s real. Here are some options for what you can do instead.
2. Use the original names and places but introduce the interview as one that was conducted with the original interviewee(s) in the original place on the original date, even if you don’t live in that area—or even in the same country.
3. Tell your listeners that you’ve fictionalized an original interview by changing the name(s) and the location(s) in the interview and changing other details so that the interview is more useful and relevant for your audience. Thus, you are broadcasting a work of fiction, a dramatized interview, even though it is based on a real interview.
4. Perhaps the most useful solution (though it takes more time and resources) is to conduct your own interviews on the same or a similar subject with farmers and other people in your area. You can use the original interview as inspiration.   
   When adapting materials:
   1. Check on all “numbers.” Many FRI scripts and Barza Wire stories contain lots of numbers: information on the number of bags or kilograms of maize harvested, the average bean harvest in an area, the number of times a farmer should weed or apply pesticides, the amount of money they receive per kilogram sold. Don’t just borrow numbers from the original material. You must replace the numbers in the script or story with numbers that make sense in your listening area. Warning: This requires research!
   2. Make sure everything in the script fits with the culture in your area—for example, women may be the primary marketers of maize in your area but not in the area where the original interview or drama was set. To make the material more relevant for your area, change these details before broadcast.
   3. Adapt the farming details to what’s common in your area. For example, you may want to substitute:
   4. The pests and diseases that are prevalent in your area.
   5. The staple crops and other crops that are common in your area.
   6. The farming practices that are common (or new) in your area related to land preparation, weeding, harvesting, pest and disease management, storage, marketing, etc. This may require some research.

**Examples of adapting FRI resources:**

**Adapting backgrounders and issue packs**

Abubakar A. Kadir from North Star FM in Tamale, Ghana, took the following steps to adapt FRI’s [backgrounder on Fall armyworm](http://scripts.farmradio.fm/radio-resource-packs/109-farm-radio-resource-pack/backgrounder-fall-armyworm-updated/).

1. He chose Fall armyworm as a topic for the regular farmer program because it’s a major issue in the listening area.
2. He read the backgrounder on Fall armyworm (FAW), accessed on the FRI website.
3. He divided the backgrounder into six sections, in line with his plan to air two episodes on FAW per month for three months, and to ensure that he airs episodes that are relevant to the agricultural calendar. The six themes were:
4. Distinguishing the Fall armyworm from similar pests.
5. Preventative measures to deal with FAW
6. Application of pesticides. (Because pesticides were applied throughout the growing season, this topic was discussed throughout the series.)
7. Myths and misconceptions about FAW.
8. Episode dedicated to women farmers.
9. Summary episode on all topics
10. He gave the backgrounder to the entire production team (a presenter, a producer, and two technicians) to read. The team then chose the most important and relevant topics from the backgrounder.
11. Kadir (host) and the producer translated the important information into Dagbani, and then scripted the episodes in Dagbani. Each episode was divided into three parts: 1) introduction and vox pop; 2) interview with resource person; and 3) phone-in.
12. The team contacted the resource persons who were most relevant for each episode. They sent questions in advance and conducted pre-interviews with officers from the Ministry of Food and Agriculture in the week leading before broadcast.
13. The team visited the field when possible before individual episodes to gather [vox pops](http://scripts.farmradio.fm/radio-resource-packs/103-2/11-how-to-use-vox-pops-in-your-farm-radio-program/).
14. The team had a post-production meeting to discuss whether they met their goals for the episode and what could be improved.

Abdul Dahim is a broadcaster who previously worked at Might FM and is now at Radio 123 in Tamale, Ghana. He adapted FRI’s [issue pack on post-harvest activities in cowpea](http://scripts.farmradio.fm/radio-resource-packs/105-farm-radio-resource-pack/cowpea-post-harvest-activities/).

1. Dahim and the production team (a co-host, the station director, a producer, and an accountant) read the issue pack individually.
2. After reading through it, Dahim and the co-host developed questions to ask a resource person during a live studio interview.
3. Two or three days before airing the episode, they chose components of the backgrounder to incorporate into different segments. For example, during field visits, they met a farmer who suffered losses from a fungal disease that was a result of poorly-drained soil. They began the episode with a vox pop of this farmer telling his story. The episode also covered the use of PICs bags, information and details of which were sourced from the issue pack on cowpeas.
4. The team kept a copy of the issue pack in the studio for reference during the live program.

Gideon Sarkodie of ADARS FM in Kintampo, Ghana, adapted a [backgrounder on maize](http://scripts.farmradio.fm/radio-resource-packs/110-farm-radio-resource-pack/backgrounder-reducing-post-harvest-losses-maize/).

1. He held focus group discussions in communities to assess community understanding of the topics. He brought a soft copy of the backgrounder on his phone and used it to draft interview questions with the farmers. He focused on the “Key information” in the backgrounder and asked questions such as: How do you understand this key information? What do you understand about early harvesting, sorting, shelling, total drying, recommended treatment, etc?
2. He discovered that the farmers he spoke to were concerned about the best time for harvesting, drying, and storage. He noted that most people want to store maize in rooms where there is little ventilation, so he discussed how to get appropriate storage facilities and promoted the use of bags, containers, and PICS bags.
3. He used the farmers’ voices as vox pops in his farmer program.

**Adapting dramas**

Abdul Dahim from Radio 123 in Tamale, Ghana, adapted a drama called [Friendship and farming: Intercropping cowpea with cereals](http://scripts.farmradio.fm/radio-resource-packs/105-farm-radio-resource-pack/friendship-farming-intercropping-cowpea-cereals/).

The production team contacted their regular drama group and asked them to create an unscripted dialogue between two actor-farmers for a segment of the program. The team had already read through the [cowpea backgrounder](http://scripts.farmradio.fm/radio-resource-packs/105-farm-radio-resource-pack/cowpea-post-harvest-activities/) and made notes in Dagbani on what topics to include in the dialogue (for example: PICS bags, fungal diseases), and they asked the voice actors to incorporate these topics into the unscripted conversation.

Here are the steps Dahim and the production followed to adapt the drama:

1. After reading the script, the team decided on which details needed to be changed—for example, Christian to Muslim names, gender to ensure gender balance, names of places, and sounds (for example, if the SFX says “drum,” the team specify a local drum/song to fit the context).
2. The team made notes of these changes on printed scripts and distributed them to the voice actors.
3. The team shortened the introduction to the drama (the Notes to broadcasters) by choosing key points and making notes in Dagbani for the voice actor/narrator to read. The resulting narrative “teaser” was five seconds long and introduced the characters and the context in Dagbani. Dahim notes that the longer introduction in English was useful because it guided the shorter Dagbani narration.
4. Rather than translating the script word for word, the voice actors studied and practiced the script in advance and made notes along the way. This enabled them to create a similar script in Dagbani that was much looser and not tightly scripted.
5. Dahim and his team recorded the entire drama live in the field and brought it back to the studio for editing.

Gideon Sarkodie from ADARS FM adapted a drama called [Papa Akwesi learns: Careful post-harvest management maximizes maize income](http://scripts.farmradio.fm/radio-resource-packs/103-2/7-papa-akwesi-learns-careful-post-harvest-management-maximizes-maize-income/).

He found that the drama was too long for the slot in his program, so he used a small part of the drama and asked farmers to volunteer to play characters. There were four characters and they used the original characters’ names. Gideon directed each volunteer and they rehearsed the drama four times, then recorded the final 15-minute drama. During the first half of the program, the segment focused on aflatoxin by reading out the part of the drama that talks about aflatoxin.

*Other notes on adapting dramas*

* A Ghanaian broadcaster adapted a [drama about using manure](http://scripts.farmradio.fm/radio-resource-packs/package-84/manure-the-magic-worker/) by airing a debate in which one person advocated the benefits of manure and another talked about the challenges of using manure and argued for using chemical fertilizer.
* Regina Suwie of Radio Progress in Wa, Ghana, teased out poems from a [drama script on cowpea](http://scripts.farmradio.fm/radio-resource-packs/105-farm-radio-resource-pack/friendship-farming-intercropping-cowpea-cereals/).
* Selorm Deyegbe from Jubilee Radio in Keta, Ghana, used the information in a [drama on fish ponds](http://scripts.farmradio.fm/radio-resource-packs/package-100-aquaculture-the-value-chain/the-need-for-firewood-to-warm-yourself-reminds-you-where-you-left-the-axe-chikumbutsa-nkhwanga-ndi-chisanu/) as background because he did not have access to a drama troupe.
* A male broadcaster in northern Ghana has a standing drama group that the station collaborates with. The broadcasters give drama scripts to the group, who choose a cast and develop a drama. Then there is a rehearsal with the scripts, which the group has modified to work as a drama. The group brings the script to the rehearsal to make sure that nothing important is missing from the script, and the broadcasters make corrections to the script, There are two rehearsals to make sure the script is ready for broadcast, and then they record.
* A female broadcaster from northern Ghana said her station also works with a drama group who they call whenever FRI sends them a drama. They meet with the group and read through the drama. After the drama is translated into Dagbani, the group rehearses the script. Sometimes the team removes or add things to the script—“There are some words that you can’t translate into Dagbani.” Then they record the drama.

Adam Hussein from Might FM in Tamale, Ghana, says the station has two different ways of doing a drama: in the studio with a drama group, or in the field by using farmers and other community members.

* **In the studio:**
  + Adam prints and shares a copy of the script with the drama director. The two sit down and discuss the drama, make any necessary changes (usually just names and places), and the director decides on roles.
  + The group then rehearses the drama.
  + After much rehearsal, they return to the studio and record the drama. Sound effects are gathered from field visits (not online). None of the voice actors has a copy of their script; instead, they memorize their lines or act through directions from the drama director.
* **In the field:**
  + Adam appoints a lead farmer to act as the drama director. Just like in-studio dramas, he and the lead farmer discuss the script, assign roles, and the drama is rehearsed.
  + The voice actors in the field do not have copies of the script. Rather, the director reads them their lines and they repeat them back. This helps when voice actors cannot read. Adam records the voices.
  + Adam also records all sound effects in the field.
  + Adam brings all the recordings back to the station and he and the station manager edit down the material. The process of gathering and preparing the material for broadcast takes about three days. Then they air the drama.

**Adapting interview scripts**

Eric Wilson is a broadcaster at Word FM in Bolgatanga. Ghana. He notes that the production team tries to incorporate an FRI interview script into every episode whenever it is possible and relevant.

He adapted an interview script called [Conservation agriculture: High yields, low production costs, and improved soil fertility](http://scripts.farmradio.fm/radio-resource-packs/109-farm-radio-resource-pack/conservation-agriculture-high-yields-low-production-costs-improved-soil-fertility/).

Here are the steps that he and his production team followed:

1. Based on the script, the producer identified a suitable resource person to interview.
2. The producer gave the script to the resource person.
3. The producer translated the script to the local language—not word for word, but by making notes in the local language on a printed copy of the script. Then the producer and resource person acted out the interview script live on-air, keeping a copy of the script for reference during the live program.
4. The second half of the script is an interview with a farmer. The producer traveled to the field to interview a local farmer. He recorded an interview, using the same questions as in the interview script, and changed the character names and locations.

Earl Samuels is the host of the morning show and the farmer programs on Suhupielli FM in Tamale, Ghana, and uses interview scripts frequently. He starts by reading through the resource and discussing the main themes with his team of eight trainees (a combination of hosts, producers, and news editors from different radio stations).

Mr. Samuels sometimes uses interview scripts in combination with backgrounders. For example, for a recent program on soil, here is the strategy he followed:

1. He read the interview script ([Conservation agriculture: High yields, low production costs and improved soil fertility](http://scripts.farmradio.fm/radio-resource-packs/109-farm-radio-resource-pack/conservation-agriculture-high-yields-low-production-costs-improved-soil-fertility/)).
2. He visited farmers and asked about their challenges related to soil.
3. He sent the script to a resource person who is well-versed on this subject. Together, they determined the key areas to talk about on the program, based on what Mr. Samuels learned in the field.
4. Mr. Samuels incorporated other information from a backgrounder called [Using permanent soil cover in conservation agriculture](http://scripts.farmradio.fm/radio-resource-packs/109-farm-radio-resource-pack/backgrounder-using-permanent-soil-cover-conservation-agriculture/) that expanded on some of the questions in the interview script.
5. The script was translated into the local language.
6. Mr. Samuels read the part of the interviewer during a live interview with the resource person. He and the resource person did not reproduce the questions and responses in the original script word for word; rather, they spoke as themselves. The script supplied some interview questions, but Mr. Samuels also used it as a guide for the order of the interview questions and the method of asking follow-up questions. Mr. Samuels and the resource person each had a hard copy of the interview script on hand during the live interview. Everything was translated into the local language.

Gideon Sarkodie from ADARS FM in Kintampo, Ghana, adapted the interview script [It's better to sell together: The benefits of collective marketing](http://scripts.farmradio.fm/radio-resource-packs/pakage-99-cassava-the-post-harvest-value-chain/its-better-to-sell-together-the-benefits-of-collective-marketing/).

1. He accessed the script on his phone during a recent field visit during which he and his co-host met with farmers to discuss the benefits of collective marketing. They used the interview script as an information document about collective marketing. They noted that they were able to use it as a guide to talk about maize in Ghana even though the original script focused on cassava in Tanzania.
2. They asked some of the questions in the script directly to the farmer group and compared their answers to what was in the script.

At other times, Gideon and his co-host have simply read the parts of the farmer and the interviewer live, translating the text into the local language, Twi, with each of them having a hard copy on hand during the live program. They changed names, settings, and place names to fit the Ghanaian context.

**Adapting Barza Wire stories**

Abubakar A. Kadir from North Star FM in Tamale, Ghana, used the following steps to adapt a Barza Wire story called [DRC: Farmers test three methods to manage Fall armyworm](http://wire.farmradio.fm/en/farmer-stories/2018/04/drc-farmers-test-three-methods-to-manage-fall-armyworm-17272)

1. He read through the story and visited the FRI website to look for relevant information.
2. The story mentioned monitoring the field for Fall armyworm and for plant damage. This reminded Kadir of the time when FAW was first found in Ghana in 2016. The Ministry of Food and Agriculture had distributed information on identifying the pest and burning the plants, but it was not sufficient.
3. Kadir mentioned the story on air and discussed the three strategies, noting how field monitoring and burning infected plants is particularly important because it’s a good strategy for farms not entirely infested by the pest.

Earl Samuels of Suhupielli FM also uses Barza Wire stories. He often uses stories from other countries. He reads the story on air, mentions it’s from another county, and suggests that farmers try the methods mentioned in the story. In subsequent episodes, he asks farmers how the methods worked for them and if they needed to make adjustments, and determines whether he needs to rebroadcast the information.

Gideon Sarkodie of ADARS FM reads Barza Wire *Farmer stories* on air. He translates the main concepts into Twi, explains that he is reading a Farm Radio Barza Wire story from another country, then asks his listeners if there is indigenous knowledge in Ghana that can be applied.

Edwin Mpokaye is the station manager at Radio Fadhila FM in the Mtwara Region of Tanzania. He frequently uses Barza Wire stories on air during his program, *Farmers Forum.* He adapted and broadcast the Barza Wire story [Malawi: Farmers make urine and leaf fertilizer to save money](http://wire.farmradio.fm/en/farmer-stories/2018/04/malawi-farmers-make-urine-and-leaf-fertilizer-to-save-money-17238). He translated the story into Swahili and then read it on air. He introduced the topic and the original location at the beginning of the story. While he kept many of the details of the original story, he removed some numbers that were not relevant to farmers in his area, such as the price of fertilizer in Malawi. At the end of the story, he mentioned that it was from Farm Radio International, Canada.

## Acknowledgements

Contributed by: Vijay Cuddeford, Managing editor, Farm Radio International.

**Sources of information**

Interviews with broadcasters in northern Ghana conducted by Maxine Betteridge-Moes, Uniterra volunteer with Farm Radio International

Broadcaster feedback workshop in Tamale, March 2017, facilitated by Vijay Cuddeford, Managing editor, Farm Radio International