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**BH2: Using online platforms for remote broadcasting**

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**Why should I use online platforms to help me broadcast remotely?**

It can sometimes be difficult for radio broadcasters to meet interview subjects in-person for a variety of financial or logistical reasons, including time constraints. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the risk of reporting a story on-location or meeting face-to-face with the people involved can be high for broadcasters and others. Fortunately, there are several online platforms that broadcasters can use to conduct interviews with farmers or agricultural experts, or to convene story meetings, host panel discussions during live or pre-recorded radio programs, convene community listener groups, and do other kinds of broadcasting work. This BH2 will cover some of the most widely-used platforms, including:

* Zoom
* Skype
* Google Chat and Meet (formerly known as Google Hangouts)
* WhatsApp
* Telegram

**How can I use these platforms to help me broadcast remotely?**

Each platform has slightly different functions and features (as outlined in the next section), but generally all can be used to:

* conduct audio and/or video interviews;
* host one-on-one or group calls with radio station staff; and
* share files, including Word documents, PDFs, images, and videos over the internet.

Please note that all of these platforms require the following:

* a stable WiFi connection or Internet data (3G or 4G/LTE)
* speakers and a microphone (built-in, USB plug-in, or wireless Bluetooth)
* a video camera (either built-in to your device, wireless Bluetooth, or one with a USB plug-in)

Before getting started with online platforms, especially during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, you might want to read our BH2s on [working remotely as a radio broadcaster](http://scripts.farmradio.fm/radio-resource-packs/covid-19-resources/working-remotely-radio-broadcaster/) and [how broadcasters can stay safe during the COVID-19 pandemic](http://scripts.farmradio.fm/radio-resource-packs/covid-19-resources/broadcasters-can-stay-safe-covid-19-pandemic/).

**How can using online platforms help me serve my listeners better?**

Radio journalists have the important responsibility of ensuring that their audience has access to reliable and fact-checked information that listeners cannot obtain themselves, or would find difficult to access in a way they can easily understand. Sometimes this means that broadcasters must take extra steps to contact sources by phone, email, text message, or video call. Using these online platforms to contact farmers, subject matter specialists, government officials, and other sources who you can’t meet in person will ensure that your listeners have access to important knowledge.

The interactivity of these platforms also allows you to share files (for example, images, videos, notes, or other documents) with your interview subject in order to make sense of the information they are sharing with you, and to get feedback in real time. For example, if you’re screen sharing with a government official about a new agricultural policy, you can scroll through the draft policy on your screen and ask them to explain each point. Or, if you’re on a video call with a farmer, you can pass along advice or insight—and perhaps even watch them implement those farming practices on-screen.

The online platforms described in this Broadcaster how-to guide also give listeners more opportunities to participate in radio programs by sharing voice notes, images, videos, or text messages. They can also provide women a chance to share their views and feedback without feeling intimidated or discouraged by male-dominated discussions.

**How do I get started?**

1. How do these online platforms work?
2. Zoom
3. Skype
4. Google Chat and Google Meet
5. WhatsApp
6. Telegram

**Details**

1. **How do these online platforms work?** (Learn more about each platform below.)

In order to use these online platforms effectively and identify which is best for you and your audience, you should consider the following factors:

* Cost (free or paid subscription)
* System requirements
* Supported devices
* Available features
* Limitations
* Who you are trying to reach

It’s important to use these platforms as an alternative way to reach farmers as well (not just subject matter specialists) who may be hard to meet with face-to-face. You could also use these platforms to engage with community listener groups.

Here are some ways to better serve your listeners by communicating with them remotely beyond a simple phone call:

* *Conducting interviews* using voice notes/audio messages. This allows interview subjects to provide more detailed and natural responses than by typing a message. It also allows them to explain themselves in their own language, without having to type. You can transfer audio files from phone to computer, convert the files to MP3, and then edit the recordings to play on a live radio program.
* *Creating groups*for listeners and subject matter specialists to discuss a particular topic. For example, you could create a WhatsApp group with health or agricultural workers, local experts, and other resource people. To avoid a flood of messages, try creating two separate groups: one for listeners and one for resource people, and then share the most important information from resource people with listeners—and the most important information from listeners with resource people.
* *Women’s only groups*are a great way to encourage more women to participate and share their views on-air without being intimidated or discouraged by a high number of male callers. For example, you could create a women’s only Telegraph or WhatsApp group or phone line.
* *Delivering market and weather reports*directly to listeners. You can send the information as an audio message or written message. Encourage listeners to forward it to other community members.

For more information about interviewing farmers, read our BH2 on [How to get farmers to talk about important things (Facilitating farmer voice)](http://scripts.farmradio.fm/radio-resource-packs/package-96-the-root-of-life/how-to-get-farmers-talking-about-important-things-facilitating-farmer-voice/).

1. **Zoom**

*Basic features*

Zoom is an online video, voice, content sharing, and chat service that you can use to host meetings, webinars (lectures), panel discussions, and more. To use Zoom, you must [download](https://zoom.us/download) the free app on a mobile or desktop and sign up for a free account.

There are four plans available with Zoom: three paid plans and one free. When the host schedules a Zoom call, the platform will generate a Meeting ID, joining link, access code, and telephone number that can be shared with participants publicly or by invitation only (see below). Participants without the Zoom app can join a Zoom meeting through an Internet browser window or by using a telephone line.

The free Basic Zoom plan includes the following features:

* *Meetings:* An interactive platform that allows all participants to see, speak, hear, and screen-share with each other. For details about scheduling a Zoom meeting, click [here](https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362413-Scheduling-meetings).
* *Webinars:*Aview-only platform where attendees cannot see each other and the host cannot see the attendees, but can present to them directly. For details about scheduling a Zoom webinar, click [here](https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/200917029-Getting-Started-With-Webinar).
* *Passcodes:*For security, passcodes can be set for meetings and webinars, but you can also create meetings without a passcode. When the host schedules a meeting or webinar and sends an invitation, the system generates and shares a Meeting ID, joining link, and password with all participants. For more information about passcodes, click [here](https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/360033559832-Meeting-and-webinar-passcodes).
* *Screen sharing:* During a Zoom *meeting*, hosts and participants can share their mobile or desktop screen with others. For help with screen sharing, click [here](https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362153-Sharing-your-screen).
* *Chat service:* Zoom meetings and webinars include a chat service that enables participants, panelists, hosts, and co-hosts to communicate by asking questions, making comments, or sharing files. The host can save the chat messages for future use. To learn more about Zoom’s chat service, click [here](https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/203650445-Using-in-meeting-chat).
* *Recording:* The host can record and save meetings and webinars to the Zoom Cloud (digital online storage) or to their computer or mobile device. Note that a paid plan is required to save to the Zoom Cloud. To learn how to record a meeting or webinar, click [here](https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362473-Local-recording).

*Please remember to ask permission of all participants before recording meetings*.

Features of the paid Zoom plans include:

* Unlimited group meetings
* 30-hour time limit for meetings
* Cloud storage
* Social media streaming
* Monthly or annual billing

*How can I use Zoom as a radio broadcaster?*

You can record a Zoom call where you interview a guest for your radio program and edit the recording to play on a live radio program. Or you can host a Zoom call that serves as an interview or a panel discussion during a live show. Just make sure you and your guests have a stable internet connection throughout.

The Zoom platform also allows broadcasters to share messages or files in the chat service, including notes, reports, interview questions, images, videos, and more. Broadcasters can then save the files directly to their device.

Zoom is also useful for convening meetings with your radio station production team, including story planning meetings, management meetings, and other business meetings. Only the host needs the Zoom app on their mobile or desktop, and others can join by using the web browser link or on a telephone line.

Note that, to take advantage of all the Zoom functions and features listed above, it is recommended to download the free app.

*Limitations of using Zoom*

The free plan allows virtual meetings with up to 100 participants for a maximum of 40 minutes. When the time limit is reached, the host needs to start a new meeting with a new joining link, Meeting ID, and password. One-on-one meetings do not have a time limit.

Zoom's paid plans (Pro, Business, and Enterprise) come with additional features, including increased time limits for meetings, the ability to conduct polls, breakout meeting rooms, Cloud recording, Cloud storage, simultaneous translation, and more.

For more information about Zoom pricing and plans, click [here](https://zoom.us/pricing).

*System requirements*

* Windows 7 or higher
* Mac OS X with Mac OS 10.9 or higher
* iOS 8.0 or later
* Android OS 5.0 or later

*Supported devices:*

* Desktop PC (Windows, Mac, Chrome OS)
* Android devices
* iPhone, iPad, iPod Touch
* Windows tablet

For a complete list of Zoom system requirements and supported operating systems, click [here](https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362023-System-requirements-for-Windows-macOS-and-Linux).

1. **Skype** (owned by Microsoft)

*Basic features*

Skype is a tool for making free voice and video calls and chatting with people anywhere in the world. All you need is an internet connection, a microphone/headset (or you can simply use the built-in microphone and speakers on your device), and a free Skype account, which you can set up after [downloading Skype](https://www.skype.com/en/get-skype/) onto your computer or mobile device. You can also sign into Skype using an Outlook, Hotmail, or Microsoft account.

You can search for people on Skype by name, phone number, or email, and build a list of contacts.

The basic features of Skype include:

* *Meetings* (see Zoom section above)
* *Screen sharing*(see Zoom section above)
* *File sharing,* including images, videos, voice messages, PDFs, spreadsheets, and other files
* *Conference calling* with up to 20 other Skype users on a call at a time
* *Calling landlines and mobiles* from anywhere in the world. You can use Skype to make calls to landlines or mobile phones for a fee. To learn more about Skype for international calls, click [here](https://www.skype.com/en/international-calls/).
* *Recording:*Skype also allows you to record calls within the app, and then save and download the recording as an mp4 video file or mp3 audio file. Note that recordings are saved inside of the chat window for up to 30 days before they are automatically deleted.

*How can I use Skype as a radio broadcaster?*

Skype is useful for recording interviews with people who might be difficult to reach. For example, a broadcaster from a rural radio station might not be able to afford the transportation and accommodation fees for an in-person interview with an agricultural specialist who lives far away. With Skype, the broadcaster could call the specialist from the station or from the closest internet cafe, directly record the interview in the app, and save the recording in a good-quality mp4 video or mp3 audio format that is ready for broadcast.

*Please remember to ask permission of all participants before recording meetings*.

*Limitations of using Skype*

A free Skype plan allows up to 20 participants on a call. If you require more participants, you need to sign up for a paid plan. To learn more about Skype subscriptions, click [here](https://support.skype.com/en/faq/FA331/what-are-the-different-types-of-skype-subscriptions-and-pay-as-you-go-options).

*System requirements:*

* Windows 10 version 1809 or higher
* Mac OS X with Mac OS 10.10 or higher
* iOS 10 or higher
* Android OS 4.0.4 or higher
* Skype for Web on Microsoft Edge or Google Chrome. Note: Skype for Web is not supported on mobile phones or tablets.

For more details about Skype system requirements, click [here](https://support.skype.com/en/faq/FA10328/what-are-the-system-requirements-for-skype).

*Supported devices:*

* Android phone and tablet
* Chromebook
* iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch
* Mac
* Windows

For more details about operating systems that are compatible with Skype, click [here](https://support.skype.com/en/faq/FA12041/what-is-the-latest-version-of-skype-on-each-platform).

1. **Google Chat and Google Meet (formerly known as Hangouts)**

*Basic features*

Google Chat and Google Meet are the two apps that replaced Google Hangouts. Google Chat can be used for direct messaging and group conversations, whereas Google Meet can be used to convene and record video meetings.

These apps are part of the Google Suite (G Suite) of services that includes Drive, Gmail, Docs, Sheets, Slides, Forms, Calendar, Google+, Sites, Hangouts, and Keep. These tools can be used through the Chat or Meet extensions in Google Chrome. Note that you and/or your radio station or organization must have a G Suite account to use these services.

Google Chat can be used for:

* *Instant messaging*
* *File sharing,* including images, videos, voice messages, PDFs, spreadsheets, and other files

Google Meet can be used for:

* *Convening and recording video meetings* (see Zoom section above)
* *Screen sharing*(see Zoom section above)
* *File sharing,* including images, videos, voice messages, PDFs, spreadsheets, and other files

*How can I use Google Chat and Google Meet as a radio broadcaster?*

Like Zoom and Skype, you can record a video meeting in the Google Meet app and edit the recording to play on a live radio program. Or, you can host the chat during a live show—just make sure you and your guests have a stable internet connection throughout.

You can also share messages or files in the chat function on both apps, including notes, reports, interview questions, images, videos, and more. Broadcasters can then save the files directly to their device.

These apps are also useful for convening meetings with your radio station production team, including story planning meetings, management meetings, and other business meetings. Make sure that all participants have a Google account to use this service.

Note that Google Chat and Meet are free to use and there is no time limit for calls.

*Limitations of using Google Chat and Meet*

To initiate a Google Chat or Meet, you need a Google account, but anyone can join a call without an account. It allows up to 150 people in a chat but limits video calls to 25 people per call. If you want to store recordings of video calls and chats, you need to buy additional storage through your Google Drive or Google One account.

*System requirements:*

These apps are compatible with the current version and previous two major releases of the following operating systems:

* Mac OS X
* Windows
* Chrome

Google Chat and Google Meet are also compatible with the following web browsers:

* Google Chrome
* Microsoft Edge
* Firefox
* Safari 13 or later
* Microsoft Internet Explorer 11

*Supported devices:*

* iPhone or iPad
* Android phone or tablet

For more information about Google Hangouts system requirements and supported devices, click [here](https://support.google.com/a/answer/6065029?hl=en).

1. **WhatsApp** (owned by Facebook)

*Basic features:*

* *WhatsApp Chat:*The simplest way to use WhatsApp is as an instant messaging platform. You can send chat messages to individuals or to a group, including texts, images, videos, PDF files, voice messages, and other files and links.
* *WhatsApp for web:* To use WhatsApp on your computer, download and open the app on your phone, tap Menu or Settings, and select WhatsApp web. Then, scan the QR code available [here](https://web.whatsapp.com/).
* *Voice messaging:* In a WhatsApp chat, you can send a voice message by pressing and holding the microphone icon located to the right of the text bar. This is a good way to communicate with listeners without having to type messages in local languages. You can forward the voice note to other people—for example, if you’re sharing an agricultural tip.
* *Broadcast lists:* This feature allows you to create and save lists of contacts and send messages to all members at once. For more information about using broadcast lists, click [here](https://faq.whatsapp.com/android/chats/how-to-use-broadcast-lists/?lang=en).

*How can I use WhatsApp as a radio broadcaster?*

* *Conducting interviews* using voice notes/audio messages. This allows interview subjects to provide more detailed and natural responses than by typing a message. You can transfer audio files from phone to computer, convert the files to MP3, and then edit the recordings to play on a live radio program.
* *Creating groups*for listeners and subject matter specialists to discuss a particular topic. For example, you could create a WhatsApp group with health authorities, local experts, and other resource people. To avoid a flood of messages, try creating two separate groups: one for listeners and one for resource people, and then share the most important information from resource people with listeners, and the most important information from listeners with resource people.
* *Delivering market and weather reports*directly to listeners. You can send the information as an audio message or written message. Encourage listeners to forward it to other community members.
* *FRI WhatsApp country groups*are a great place to communicate with other radio broadcasters in your country and share ideas, tips, and other important information. To join an FRI country page, send an email with your name, the name of your radio station / organization, and your phone number to radio@farmradio.org.
* *Women’s only WhatsApp lines*are a great way to encourage more women to participate and share their views on-air without being intimidated or discouraged by the high number of male callers.
* *Broadcast lists*are a good way to share mini-clips and other important information from a radio program with multiple people simultaneously.

*What are the limitations of WhatsApp?*

WhatsApp can only be activated with one phone number on one device at a time. There is no option to transfer your chat history between platforms, but you can export your chat history as an email attachment. This is important if you want to save WhatsApp messages but need to clear memory space on your phone or computer. Also, the maximum file size for all media (photos, videos, voice messages) sent through WhatsApp is 16 MB per file.

There is currently no way to record audio or video calls within the app. However, you can record a phone interview on WhatsApp by putting the call on speaker and recording it with a separate recorder.

*System requirements:*

* Android OS 4.0.3 or higher
* iOS 9 or higher
* KaiOS 2.5.1 or higher

*Supported devices:*

* Android devices
* iOS devices
* JioPhone or JioPhone 2
1. **Telegram**

*Basic features:*

Telegram is another free communication service that is popular in many countries. It offers voice and video calling as well as chat services with a focus on security and speed. Messages sent through Telegram are heavily encrypted and highly secure, which make it a safer and more reliable communication service for some users.

The basic features of Telegram include:

* *Chat,* including basic text messages or audio messages to individual or group recipients
* *Video calling*
* *Voice calling*
* *Unlimited file sharing:* Telegram does not have a limit on the size of media and chats.
* *Unlimited call capacity:* Telegram can host up to 200,000 people in a group call.
* *Secret chats:* All messages in secret chats use end-to-end encryption, meaning that only you and the recipient can read the messages, and that the messages can’t be forwarded to anyone else. With this feature, you can also order your messages to self-destruct after a set period of time. To learn more about secret chats, click [here](https://telegram.org/faq?setln=en#q-how-are-secret-chats-different).
* *Seamless sync*allows you to access your messages from several devices at once and share an unlimited number of files that can be up to 2GB each.

For more basic information about Telegram, click [here](https://telegram.org/faq?setln=en#q-what-is-telegram-what-do-i-do-here).

*How can I use Telegram as a radio broadcaster?*

Telegram is a useful app for radio broadcasters who may require secure communication services if they are dealing with sensitive subject matter or working in a country or region with limited telecommunications freedom. However, in some countries, it is not the app most people use to communicate.

Otherwise, Telegram is a reliable and secure communications platform that can be used in much the same ways as Skype, Zoom, Google Meet, and WhatsApp to conduct interviews with hard-to-reach people, and to share files and save and edit recordings for radio broadcast. Given its additional security features and unlimited file sharing and call capacity, it may be a better choice than WhatsApp in some situations.

*System requirements:*

* Android OS 4.0.3 or higher
* iOS 9 or higher
* KaiOS 2.5.1 or higher

*Supported devices:*

* Android devices
* iOS devices

**Where else can I learn about using online platforms for radio broadcasting?**

Farm Radio International, 2019. *Connecting with farmers, journalists and communicators on social media*. Barza Wire. <https://wire.farmradio.fm/resources/connecting-with-farmers-journalists-and-communicators-on-social-media/>

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Tellier, Hannah. 2020. *How Ouaga FM creates quality content despite the restrictions of COVID-19,* Barza Wire. <https://wire.farmradio.fm/spotlights/how-ouaga-fm-creates-quality-content-despite-the-restrictions-of-covid-19/>

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