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WHEN STUDENTS MAKE FARMER TRAINING VIDEOS

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In Kenya, a single extension worker has to reach out to nearly 2000 farmers, making it impossible to give meaningful training to everyone. The extension workers simply cannot give farmers the information and skills needed to improve farm livelihoods.

We all know that farmers love to learn from each other. They like to see what their neighbours do, and try new ideas. But even so, each farmer only has so many neighbours.

That is why it is such a great idea to make videos with farmers, for farmers, in other parts of the country and beyond. Filming farmers is a powerful way to reach other farmers, showing them how others solve problems.

Such videos can help farmers to learn from their peers, locally and regionally. In 2013, I was among the lucky ones within my university to get trained by Access Agriculture in the production of farmer training videos. It was a thrilling experience for me. I saw an opportunity for me as a lecturer to make meaningful impact on farmers. This in turn would improve the farmer's livelihoods.

The farmers we showed the videos to, liked them very much. I set out on a mission: to train my students to make such videos. I teach communication technology courses to students at the university so it was easy

for me to get students to start making videos to use with farmers.

I teach students in three levels: diploma, bachelors and masters. I show all three groups how to make agricultural videos and then upload them on the Agtube website. This way, the students get excited about actually engaging with farmers. Students love it when they find that what they do is useful and that other students learn from them. It is a fun way to learn. Each video uploaded in the site is graded. This is a deliberate integration of videos in the curriculum.

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I take the masters group through the steps in shooting farmer-to-farmer videos. This includes factsheet writing, validating the fact sheets with farmers in the field, scriptwriting, shooting and editing. These activities are very enjoyable. Students get to interact with farmers on a one-to-one basis. They get to understand the importance of keeping it simple. It is a huge learning experience for them. One student said, "Now I know that keeping it simple is better than complex academic reports".

“Wow! This is beautiful!” I heard a student say that when she was asked to go to the field to film a farmer. Filming allows students and farmers to spend time together. It is an exciting venture, where students bond with each other and with farmers. Students are thrilled to think that they are making a meaningful impact on farmers.

On the other hand, the farmers are very happy to see that universities are interested in using them as teachers of other farmers (and of students). This is a huge motivation for them. They actually do not need any payment for taking part in the video.

When we finish the videos we return to the communities to share the videos with the farmers, who are delighted to see the videos. The farmers seem excited and they relate with the innovations presented in



University students learn about filming and farming by making a video with a community.

the videos. After viewing videos, farmers ask, “Do you have a video on dairy cattle feeding ... raising chickens ... making bee hives?” Videos presented in the local tongue are well received and make it easier to adopt innovations.

I have made a deliberate move to ask students to visit and view videos on the Access Agriculture and AgTube websites. I have downloaded over 40 Access Agriculture videos. I select a few and show them to the students in my class. These videos have aroused a lot of interest with students. “Video is very useful. It makes learning practical skills seem so easy to handle”, one student said after a show.

I always guide them to the Access Agriculture website to view more videos. I have gone a level higher now. I am sending students to view a particular video. I then

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ask them to download the script. If the script is not available, I ask them to transcribe and translate it into their local language. To do this, I group students from the same ethnic groups to do the translation into their language. Though this is challenging and involving, it is interactive and exciting.

Students like the videos, and think that they are practical for farmers. Students also really get interested in taking part in making videos.

Everything has a challenge. My main challenge for this work is the lack of funds. But we are so interested that we spend some of our own money making the videos. So the videos are a learning experience for students, not just for farmers. Time is limited, but we make time for this work. Internet connectivity is another challenge, but students can access the free university internet when there are few users.

The story does not end with the students. The university has recognised the good work being done with the videos and I was approached to train lecturers on how to write extension materials for farmers. These lecturers write for the “Seeds of Gold” column in the *Daily Nation Newspaper*. The participants appreciate the “keep it simple” principle and the focus group interactions that helped them see how farmers see the message.

I take every opportunity to ask students and other stakeholders to like and comment on the posts in the social media sites. These include Facebook and Twitter. I also share agricultural photographs or video clips via WhatsApp.

The farmer-to-farmer videos have had a big impact on my teaching, and on my students, many of whom will be the next generation of extension workers.

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