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SHOWING VIDEOS WITHOUT ELECTRICITY

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The Access Agriculture website offers a variety of videos with useful information that is not always known to many farmers in my country of Benin. The videos are short, easy to understand and available in some of my country's local languages.

My association (Youth Action for Development) has often reflected on how to disseminate these videos to remote areas and we decided to make public video viewings to reach many farmers at once. This is our contribution to the development of the agricultural sector of the municipality of Natitingou.

But before projecting videos, it was first necessary to identify and select those that would be useful to farmers there. We visited farmers' vegetable fields to discuss and see the challenges they face. They talked about many problems related to the soil, their nurseries and insect and pest attacks, as well as water scarcity.

To help them, we downloaded about 30 videos from Access Agriculture and other websites. We also got some videos on health issues such as cholera, and tuberculosis.

We then started organising what we needed for the public video viewings in the villages of Natitingou. We rent a video projector for 10 US dollars a day; we rent an entire sound system (microphone, loudspeaker)

for about 15 dollars a day; we use our own laptop computer; and we rent a generator with fuel for about 15 dollars a day.

For one public viewing, we spend about \$45, including travel and transportation expenses. This expense prevents us from visiting a village many times. We are requesting funding from international partners from our network to support our video projection work.

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In one village close to Yetapo Natitingou, a big crowd of people gathered around the projection site. During the public viewing, we noticed that some of the participants caused a lot of noisy chatter and people would laugh because of certain questions that were asked. In Benin we speak many languages. Some villages even have speakers of three or four different languages.

During our evaluation of the session, we observed that several farmers at the edge of the crowd were not able to understand what was being said and



Vegetable growing is a hot topic for young farmers.

therefore would not be able to practise the techniques shown on screen.

After that, we decided to work directly with farmers through their associations, which are groups of 15 to 20 farmers. We directly work with them after showing each video. We also include one or two videos on health issues relevant to the area. The farmers like the video screenings, which are also a chance for us to chat with the villagers and to get to know them.

One evening, we organised a video viewing for youth at the Agricultural High School of Natitingou. Because they have access to electricity, we did not use the generator. At one point, when all the participants were focused on watching the video, there was suddenly a power cut. Despite this cut, we could continue with the projection using our battery-powered laptop.

As a youth organisation with little money for renting projection equipment, using a laptop turned out to be effective. The rural population was also satisfied with it. The laptop has allowed us to show videos in many more villages in the municipality of Natitingou. But we still need funding to subsidise our visits to the farmers for video projections.

By using a laptop, we have increased our projections from five to ten per month and can return to the same village to explain the content and to repeat the projection. In villages which have access to electricity, we sell them the DVD with 10 videos for the bargain price of 1 dollar.



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Translation is often a challenge. Some of the languages in our area are spoken by just a few communities. For some of these languages we have no videos at all. We have to show the videos in French and translate them ourselves, simultaneously. Sometimes the translator misses important details and changes the meaning of the message.

We have challenges, such as the lack of electricity, and language barriers. But we are working things out. We are learning by our experience. Farmers sometimes learn from accidents. Advisory service providers, like us, also learn from serendipity. When forced to suddenly find an alternative to the electrical grid, we realized that we could show videos using our laptop.

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