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I BOUGHT IT—IT'S MINE

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Boko and Jean are two rice growers in Benin. Boko is 58 years old and has been producing rice seed for more than 35 years in central Benin.

Jean is a 28-year-old farmer who has grown rice for over 10 years. When they heard on the local radio stations that rice training videos were available at the shops of the Radio Ilema in Dassa and Collines FM in Glazoue, the two farmers went to check it out.

Boko received two DVDs for free at the radio station in Dassa, less than 1 km away from his house. Jean left his house 8 km from the radio station of Glazoue to buy both of the rice training DVDs for \$2.

The videos were made by the Africa Rice Center and released in 2009 to farmers through several rural radio stations. They were all given the option of either distributing the videos for free, or selling them.

Many farmers and other interested people went to the distribution points to get copies of the DVDs.

At home, Boko brought out his TV around 8 PM to watch his new videos. As soon as Boko started, his wives, his children and some village neighbours gathered around the TV. Two days later, his brother François came to him and asked to borrow the DVDs. Boko loaned them to him without any reservation.

A few days later it was his friend and fellow member of the farmer organisation who came to borrow the

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DVDs to watch them with his family. Within 3 months more than 15 farmers borrowed the DVDs from Boko.

After a year, Boko lost both his DVDs because he can no longer remember the last person who borrowed them from him. He went back to the radio station of Ilema and learned that the videos were no longer available.

Another day while listening to radio Collines FM of Glazoue, he heard that they had DVDs for sale for \$2. Boko asked his first wife Sica to buy him new DVDs at the radio shop.

After getting his second set of the DVDs, Boko refused to loan them to anyone. He was afraid of losing his DVDs again or getting them back scratched or damaged. He spent money on them and would like to keep them for a long time.

When Boko showed us the DVDs, he stressed, “If I had not taken good care of these ones, I would have lost them as well or found them scratched”. Then he put

one of the DVDs into his player and I saw that the DVDs were still in good condition.

As I was leaving, I asked him for the last time, “What would you do if your brother or an in-law asks to borrow the DVDs from you?”

His response was prompt “Any person interested in the videos, even my mother-in-law, will have to watch the videos right there at my place. No one will go away with my DVDs.”

As for Jean, he installed his video equipment and TV in his living room where he often watched the videos alone and from time to time with his wives and a few friends. But he firmly refused to let his DVDs out of his house. In fact Jean said he went to buy his DVDs at the radio station because the leaders of his farmer association only let certain members watch the DVDs.

In my study, of the 32 farmers who bought DVDs, less than 10 loaned their DVDs to relatives and friends.

Jean said, “Once the DVDs stayed with the secretary of the farmer organisation for 3 months while other members and I were waiting for our turn. When I went to the secretary to tell him that he is not doing right, he told me that I am too young to say that, and I should learn to respect my elders, and that I can go buy my own DVDs if I wish”.

Two weeks later Jean went to the shop at the radio station in Glazoue, where he bought the DVDs. He said he is happy to have his own DVD and he can now watch it whenever he wants.

Currently the DVDs of the farmer organisation are not working properly and members as well as friends come to Jean’s place to watch the videos.

Jean never lets his DVDs go out of his house. As an example, he told us this: “One day, a woman of the Union of Rice Growers of Zou-Collines came to borrow my DVDs to make copies. I firmly refused because the radio people often communicate that the DVDs cannot be duplicated and anyone who does that will be sentenced”.



Take care of precious objects, including DVDs—it may not be possible to replace them.

Like Boko and Jean, many farmers who bought the DVDs don’t share them with any of the other farmers. In my study, of the 32 farmers who bought DVDs, less than 10 loaned their DVDs to relatives and friends.

This is how I came to realise that farmers who bought the DVDs treated them as precious properties and were reluctant to loan them to other farmers (although they were happy to share the content, by letting people visit their home to watch the videos).

These farmers still have their DVDs, while those who loaned them to others have lost theirs or the disk has been damaged as it passed through several hands. Farmers who buy their DVDs take good care of them.

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