

Ensuring Quality of Processes and Content for Optimized Impact



About Us

Digital Green is a not for profit international development organization that uses an innovative digital platform for community engagement to improve lives of rural communities across South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. We partner with local public, private and civil society organizations to share knowledge on improved agricultural practices, livelihoods, health, and nutrition, using locally produced videos and human mediated dissemination. In a controlled evaluation, the approach was found to be 10 times more cost-effective and uptake of new practices seven times higher compared to traditional extension services.¹

Till date, we have produced over 2,800 videos in more than 20 languages, reached 3,000 villages and over 330,000 farmers. We currently implement projects in seven states in India and in select areas in Ethiopia, Ghana, Mozambique and Tanzania in Africa in partnership with over 20 partners.

Our Approach

We engage with and empower rural communities to produce participatory localized videos, leveraging pre-existing group structures to disseminate these videos through human mediation. These videos are of the community, by the community and for the community. The approach includes: (1) a participatory process for video production on improved livelihood practices, (2) a human-mediated learning model for video dissemination and training, (3) a hardware and software technology platform for data management customized to limited or intermittent Internet and electrical grid connectivity, and (4) an iterative model to progressively address the needs and interests of the community with analytical tools.

Our data management software called Connect Online | Connect Offline (COCO) and Analytics dashboard suite customized to low resource settings are used to collect and analyse near real-time data on dissemination, adoption, and community interest.

¹Gandhi, R., R. Veeraraghavan, K. Toyama and V. Ramprasad (2009). "Digital Green: Participatory Video for Agricultural Extension", Information Technologies for International Development, MIT Press. <http://itidjournal.org/itid/article/view/322/145>

Quality Assurance Strategy

Implementation of the Digital Green approach is guided by and contingent on a robust quality assurance (QA) framework. A set of standard operating procedures (SOPs) is applied to the critical phases of the Digital Green approach. Key processes such as selection of partners and community resources, capacity building, content development, video production, dissemination, reporting, and quality checks have been defined in these SOPs. Quality checks are run on each of these key processes using various tools.

The QA strategy has evolved over a period of time, from observing processes like video production and facilitation skills to gauging the quality of videos produced, practices adopted, and data entered into the online database management framework and knowledge bank. The strategy is two-pronged, designed to assess quality of both process and content to validate and ensure efficacy of the approach as well as its impact.



Assessing process quality to improve efficacy of intervention

The quality of processes essential to implementing the Digital Green approach is assessed through the following mechanisms:

1. SOPs: The SOPs inform the process of selecting community level resources for implementing the intervention. These local resources are also trained as per SOPs. Our partners are oriented on these standard processes to maintain the quality of implementation as well as its efficiency.

2. Supportive supervision and follow-up trainings: During the initial phase of a new collaboration, we provide hands-on support to the partner to implement the approach, thus, ensuring its institutionalization within the partner's existing extension services. This support includes providing feedback based on quality checks and verifications.

3. Recognizing quality performance: We have recently introduced a mechanism to recognize high-performing village intermediaries such as mediators and video producers to institutionalize quality assurance within the community organizations and increase ownership of the approach.

4. Site visits: Supportive supervision includes site visits conducted to check the quality of deliverables, independently by our team and jointly with partner staff.

5. Monthly review meetings: Review meetings are held every month with partner staff and local resources at the district level to monitor program performance. During these meetings, observations and verifications from site visits, issues and challenges are discussed. Additionally, these forums provide an opportunity for peer

learning groups to connect and share knowledge and experience with regard to content of the knowledge products and facilitation of screenings.

6. Data management: Community feedback and intervention related details are recorded and entered into our online data management framework. The Digital Green technology stack provides for creation of a knowledge bank available in the public domain for free access and sharing of knowledge products.

7. Reviews and audits: Regular audits are conducted by internal teams to check the quality of processes across each project.

8. Third party quality audit: To improve the quality of our processes, we have contracted an external agency, Sambodhi Research and Communications Pvt. Ltd. to audit the quality of our disseminations. Sambodhi is also validating adoptions verified by the mediators on sample basis to check their quality.

Assessing quality of content to strengthen impact of intervention

The quality of the content of the knowledge products created through the intervention, in terms of accuracy and relevance of messaging, is also

assessed periodically through different means.

1. Partner due diligence: We work with our partners to ensure the quality of the content of the knowledge products being developed, in terms of standardizing practices, addressing community requirements and providing information that is relevant to the local context. Storyboard approval, video reviews and video approval processes are some of the mechanisms for ensuring content quality. Our partners are also required to undertake adoption verification on a sample of the total adoptions. As a part of our own quality assurance protocol, we validate the verified adoptions on a sample basis to ensure quality of adoptions.

2. Technical Advisory Committee: District-level domain experts of our partners have been primarily responsible for the quality of content produced and shared. Thematic specialists at a state level sample these videos periodically as well. We have also established a national-level technical advisory committee (TAC) comprising domain experts drawn from multidisciplinary fields such as agriculture research and development, development communication, gender research, community mobilization, quality assurance, agriculture economics, and policy and research landscapes in India, who help in vetting individual



videos as well as bundles of agricultural best practices across different domains.

3. Community feedback: Community feedback is used to guide iterations to the videos so as to improve the quality and to increase relevance to the local context. Often the local practices promoted by the community require validation, which is facilitated by the research partners who are part of the TAC.

4. Participatory research: We work with external researchers and partners to analyse how the adoption of practices correlates with changes in yield or income to farmers. By conducting research trials in a participatory manner on actual farmer fields, we have an opportunity to both understand the specific nuances that determine the value that a practice provides to individuals as well as have a site from which videos showcasing the utility of practices over control conditions can be produced and shared with farmers and researchers alike.

Protocols

Quality checks have been instituted at three levels: (1) at the community level through local resources, (2) partner level through state and

district program teams, and (3) the Digital Green level through regional program teams. Protocols have been set at each level under which a defined number of observations and verification of processes are conducted using standard tools, which are then analyzed by the regional team. Based on the analysis, corrective measures are suggested which are translated into modifications to the implementation plan to improve the quality of content and delivery processes. We provide feedback, supportive supervision and refresher trainings to the partner staff and local resources to improve the quality. Trainings provided by us and partner trainers are also assessed through QA tools.

Way forward

The objective of the QA strategy is to ensure the quality of knowledge products developed and shared across the Digital Green knowledge management platform as well as standardized institutionalization of key components of our approach within the partners' systems and within the communities we engage with. Adherence to the defined QA protocols helps ensure sustainability of efforts to improve the efficacy of existing extension systems.

