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Capacity Building for Community Empowerment

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.

[1] Gandhi, 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

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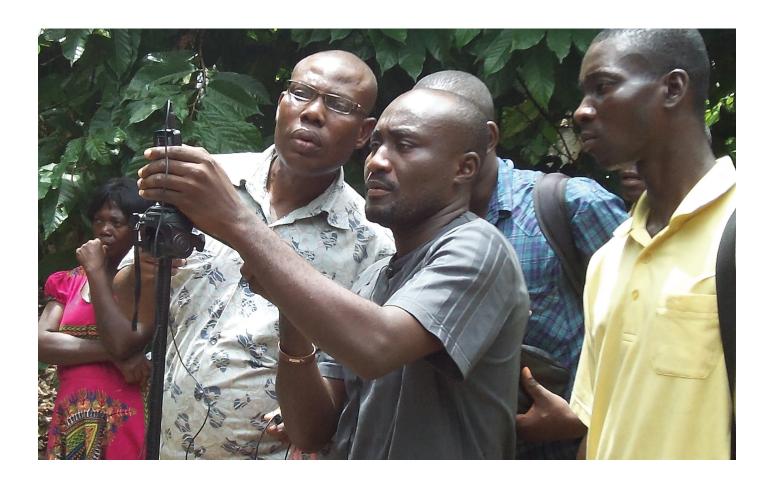
Evolution of the Training Strategy

Training is an integral part of the Digital Green approach, since it is designed around building the capacity of local communities in producing and sharing knowledge products, specifically short videos, for improved livelihoods. The objectives of the training strategy are to:

• Enhance capacity of local community members on video production, dissemination and data management through a modularized and structured approach

• Build capacity of local community members to function as trainers

In the early days, partner staff and community members were trained intensively on camera handling, storyboarding, shooting and editing videos, dissemination and feedback gathering using coaching approach and demonstrations. With time, video production and dissemination trainings became more structured and visual aids were introduced. The traditional coaching approach has given way to group discussions, lecture method, brainstorming, demonstrations, and hands-on exercises. Trainings are now more participatory, with an emphasis on creating an appreciation among the participants about our approach.

As we scale up across geographies, our training strategy has evolved to include capacity-building of a cadre of master trainers (within the partner staff as well as community level), with a special emphasis on enhancing the facilitation skills of these trainers. In addition, by modularizing the training sessions into short videos, we plan to add a layer of accessibility to global partners interested in leveraging the Digital Green approach.

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Training Methodology

We have adopted a two-pronged approach to deliver trainings.

• *In-person training model:*

Our trainers and master trainers directly train partner staff and community resource persons in the key components of the Digital Green approach: video production, dissemination, and data management.

The training design follows a cascading model with an inbuilt component to improve quality of the processes through feedback from peers. Peer review can alternately take place either by observing trainings in small groups or a mediator performing a mock video dissemination in a larger group.

At scale, our trainers build the capacity of partners and franchisees to develop an internal cadre of trainers or master trainers. These master trainers,

in turn, provide in-person training to end users/local communities on the key components. This strategy has been initiated with our partners in Andhra Pradesh and Bihar, the Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP) and JEEViKA, respectively.

• *Virtual training model:*

Where in-person trainings are not possible, trainees (trainers and the community resource persons) can take online courses. Virtual trainings will be delivered through video-based training modules to: (1) improve trainees' knowledge levels through individual modules, and (2) enable trainees to take a course on video production, dissemination and data management through a series of sequenced modules/curriculum. In the first case, trainees can use online assessment tools to gauge their level of learning, and in the second case, assessment will be compulsory after completion of each session/module and registration will be mandatory. Achieving the benchmark score will be necessary to proceed to the next session.

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Assessment and Accreditation

To measure the change in trainees' knowledge levels, post-test forms have been developed for in-person trainings. A tool to assess the quality of trainings has been developed, which includes guidelines on designing and facilitating trainings, as well as the subject knowledge of the trainers for a particular training.

After each training, be it in-person or virtual, our authorized accreditors use assessment tools to observe the participants for change in knowledge and skills to certify / accredit them as village resource persons, trainers, or master trainers. Authorized trainers and master trainers are required to take refresher courses in order to get accreditation for the next period.

Way forward

Our training strategy is designed to dovetail with our organizational objective, which is to create an online knowledge platform to train farmers to become community knowledge workers and enable them to share locally-relevant agricultural skills with their peers.

This e-learning and accreditation platform for knowledge workers built around videos will help provide agricultural training to one million farmers across 10,000 villages, over the next three years.