See program overview in the following news clip:

“2015 WISE Award Winner: Talking Book Program from Ghana” (3 minutes)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zvLq5QLc_UE&t=19s
This farmer, Felix, split his maize farm into two halves. On one half, he planted just as his parents and grandparents had taught him.

On the other half, he tried new practices that he had learned by listening to the device he’s holding.
We create audio recordings filled with knowledge from local experts.
on health behaviors and agriculture practices
to address the needs of people in hard-to-reach communities.
They are able to listen to these audio recordings whenever they like using this simple and durable audio device called the Talking Book.
A key part of our approach is working with partners like these.

We help partners achieve their outcomes by providing and adapting the Talking Book Program to their needs.
THE PROBLEM
The problem we set out to address is that in thousands of hard-to-reach communities in Ghana and many other countries,
it’s costly and therefore relatively rare for one of these experts to visit.

If you are lucky enough to see one of these experts, you probably won’t remember everything you learned,

because you can’t take notes if you’re illiterate.

And most farmers in these communities are illiterate.
And when the health ministry brings bed nets to a community,

some people will use them, but they won’t know to tuck the net in underneath their mattress and inspect it for holes.
Other people won’t use bed nets at all – at least not for their intended purpose,

because they won’t fully appreciating how a bed net can save the life of a pregnant women or child.
Since 2007, we’ve used the Talking Book to solve this problem for hundreds of thousands of people in remote communities.
The Talking Book uses **audio recordings** so we can reach farmers without **literacy skills**.

The Talking Book uses locally available **batteries** so we can reach communities **without grid electricity**.

It plays **songs, dramas, interviews, and peer messages**, so we can **engage, teach, and convince** listeners to try something new.

It **records user feedback and logs usage statistics** so we can **learn how to improve** the content and understand how content is being used.
The Talking Book’s content can be updated over USB in about 60 seconds with any Android phone or device.

During this process, user feedback and usage statistics are also collected and uploaded to the cloud for processing whenever the phone has a 3G or WIFI signal.
Farmers often listen to the Talking Book while they farm.
They also listen in their homes with their children,
and in weekly group meetings.
A key piece of our program is capturing recorded user feedback on the Talking Book, which we review on a quarterly basis to learn how we can improve our content in the following quarter.

We combine this qualitative information with the quantitative usage statistics that tells us which messages are most & least popular and which communities are most & least engaged.
User Feedback on Agriculture

• “The reason for burning the bush is because certain animals like snakes are feeding on our chickens so if Dery, Bayou and Ayou are burning the bush I have to also burn so that my environment will be clear. But I know it is not good.”

• “If I vaccinate my poultry and in two weeks they hatch chickens can I continue to vaccinate the chickens?”

• “I’ve listened to the Talking Book and practice exactly what it says. And I have seen the benefits regarding composting manure, comparing last year and this year. So if you don’t have money to buy fertilizer, learn how to prepare compost manure.”
Radio, mobile phones, and video have limitations:

- **Radio** doesn’t allow farmers to listen whenever they are ready to learn. It can’t be paused or repeated.

- **SMS** doesn’t work for those who cannot read.

- **Voice** over mobile phones is typically limited to 1-minute calls after which most people hang up. Our program has found repeated listening of 10 and 20-minute messages. Voice calls are also significantly more expensive because you have to pay for each minute that each person listens. Mobile phone programs also widen the existing gender gap.

- **Video** allows showing demonstrations, but the cost and complexity is greater and the audience cannot take the video home to repeat whenever they like.
OUR PROGRAM APPROACH
Our mission has us focused on achieving high-level impacts, which are influenced by many factors.

But Literacy Bridge’s strength is in providing audio knowledge and convincing arguments to lead to behavior change.

Therefore, we work with partners to ensure the factors that are not our strengths are being addressed to maximize our impact.
1. We work with partners to understand their objectives.

2. We conduct research / barrier analysis to understand why these behaviors are not currently in place.

3. We can then propose a set of specific indicators to our partners to know if we are achieving the objective.

4. These indicators measure the baseline and endline levels of knowledge, attitudes, and practices necessary to achieve the objectives.

5. With these indicators agreed upon, we can plan out a content campaign: what type and how many messages will be deployed, to which communities, across various languages, over what time period.
6. We develop outlines for songs, dramas, interviews, and peer endorsements written in English/French so stakeholders can review and ensure the messages support the objectives.

7. Local behavior change experts work with youth drama groups & women’s singing groups to create engaging & locally relevant messages, which are back-translated for stakeholder approval.

8. Messages are loaded onto Talking Books. Every three months, a network of smartphone-equipped field agents update them with new content.

9. User feedback and usage statistics are collected during the updates. The smartphone app stores stats until a 3G signal is available. Within hours, partners can view the latest usage data and begin reviewing user feedback to adjust content plans.

10. Finally, endline surveys are conducted, and the evaluation is reported. Surveys are also often performed at the midpoint.
Here’s an example of a partnership that covered more than a dozen objectives funded by multiple donor agencies.
These costs are typical costs for programs of 50,000+ beneficiaries (people who listen to the Talking Book or are directly cared for by a listener).

The program is particularly cost-effective when multiple behavior objectives are addressed, e.g. health, agriculture, and gender-focused topics. This brings the per-behavior cost down very low.

The per-minute cost reflects the total program cost divided by the number of message minutes delivered. This is lower than most voice mobile rates, and yet it includes all program costs, e.g. content development, Talking Book leasing, batteries, and ongoing monitoring.
ASSESSING THE PROGRAM
In a peer-reviewed research paper, use of Talking Books correlated with a 48% improvement in crop production.

Farmers with Talking Books regularly win Ghana’s Ministry Agriculture “Best Farmer” awards. The woman on the right won the award for best Soybean farmer in the entire country of Ghana.

Watch three winning farmers discuss the Talking Book: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eRvlzT8BPzQ (2 min)

Other awards include: Best Female Farmer, Soya Farmer, Pig Farmer, Sheep Farmer, Conservation Agriculture Farmer, Technology Adoption Farmer, Cowpea Farmer, Groundnut Farmer, Gardener, Sorgum Farmer, Millet Farmer, and Best Overall Farmer.
A randomized controlled trial (RCT) evaluation designed with UNICEF showed 50% more pregnant women and children slept under bed nets in the treatment communities compared to the control communities.

7 messages on the subject were produced and distributed. Each message was listened 3.0 times by the average household for a total of 283 minutes of listening to messages on LLINs.

The malaria portion of the program cost $20,000, making the cost for each person who started using bednets to be $2.50.
50% more people washed their hands with soap in the treatment communities compared to the control communities.

They listened to each of the 6 messages on handwashing with soap an average of 2.2 times for a total of 109 minutes of listening to messages on this subject.

The average cost of getting one new person to wash their hands with soap was calculated to be $2.17.
We are proud of these strong results, but it’s important to note we didn’t succeed at everything.

We are currently studying why we did not show a statistically significant improvement in safe delivery and routine immunization.

While we saw significant improvement in knowledge on diarrhea treatment and breastfeeding, we did not see significant changes in reported practice.
Thank you for your time to understand our program.

Please let us know if this program can help you achieve your objectives for social behavior change or skills development.