USING INTERACTIVE VOICE RESPONSE TO PROVIDE REMOTE TRAINING FOLLOW-UP:
OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONTINUED LEARNING AND INTERACTION

From July to September 2016, Winrock International and the **Empowered Entrepreneur Training Program** ("EETP") Team piloted an **Interactive Voice Response** (IVR) system, with following goals:

- Reinforce 'Business', 'Empowerment', and 'Leadership' concepts introduced and training methods practiced in preceding trainer certification program.
- Share new ideas and suggestions from fellow trainers.
- Explore an alternative to costly in-person refresher trainings for certified trainers.
- Determine the viability of utilizing similar messages directly to the entrepreneurs supported by EETP trainers.

Facilitation of the Empowered Entrepreneur Training Handbook's empowerment and leadership topics involves personal reflection, as well as context-specific modifications of training content, to ensure its relevance to the entrepreneurs being trained. For this reason, a series of tips were developed to support the trainers in their own personal growth and understanding of empowerment and leadership practices. Additional tips, including for business topics, also provided guidance for adapting and relating concepts to entrepreneurs' specific context.

To deliver these tips, Winrock used a self-service platform through Voto Mobile (https://www.votomobile.org), a service provider experienced in working with development and research organizations to engage mobile phone users through voice and SMS messages. Because of user-costs associated with SMS responses, tips and questions for trainers were delivered using IVR, allowing the recipient to respond to questions using their key pad at no cost. This approach could also be applicable for entrepreneurs with lower literacy levels.

KEY FIGURES AND RESULTS:

34	**8**	**5**	**27**	**297**	**254**	**58%**	**3**
trainers included in the pilot	different countries of residence	weeks pilot duration	unique tips recorded and sent	calls placed over five weeks	tips selected and heard by participating trainers	weekly trainer success rate, on average (success = at least 1 tip selected & listened to)	average # of weeks' tips heard per trainer (out of possible 5)

"It's like listening to a mentor reminding you of all the great pieces in the book and how to handle the trainings each week. Also helps in personal planning, keeping track of trainings and improving follow up."

– PARTICIPATING TRAINER

Topics:	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4	WEEK 5
	Business	**Empowerment** (trainer focus)	**Empowerment** (entrepreneur focus)	**Leadership** (trainer focus)	**Leadership** (entrepreneur focus)
Success rate (% trainers reached)	65%	53%	56%	68%	47%
# tips played	34	65	60	52	43
Most popular tips	1. Marketing with a gender lens 2. SWOT for Business Growth	1. Overcoming Limiting Beliefs 2. Behavior Change 3. Overcoming Limiting Beliefs	1. Overcoming Limiting Beliefs 2. Core Beliefs 3. Setting intentions 4. Behavior Change	1. Clear Visions 2. Problem-Solving 3. SMART Goals	1. SMART Goals 2. Clear Visions 3. Problem-Solving

BEST PRACTICES:

- Used IVR system to place outbound SMS and voice messages to minimize cellular costs for trainers.
- Adjusted calls to the local time-of-day preference of trainers (morning, afternoon, or evening).
- Gave option to record feedback and/or stories on the call, followed-up using WhatsApp.
- Reached out to select trainers for ongoing feedback to test and adjust use of the platform.
- Saved tips to a Dropbox folder (www.bit.ly/eeth-tips) so trainers could download and listen to them at will.
- Sent SMS messages ahead of calls as reminder, and repeated call the next day for those that missed scheduled call time.

TECHNICAL CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED, OR ANTICIPATED FOR NEXT PHASE WITH ENTREPRENEURS:

- Calls are routed through local telecommunications companies, which affects the consistency and quality of the calls week-to-week, country-to-country.
- Trainers' schedules and work locations vary week-to-week, making it difficult for many to connect on the first attempt. In these cases, follow-up calls were needed.
- It proved difficult to customize call scheduling with large number of recipients over various time zones.

MOVING FORWARD:

Given the positive responses from trainers, next steps include:

- Continuing with new quarterly tips and reminders as requested by trainers.
- Selecting 1-2 trainer organizations interested and available to adapt and translate tips for their networks of entrepreneurs.
- Exploring additional features and services that can facilitate communication with larger numbers of recipients and support entrepreneur-specific needs (beyond self-service).

TRAINER FEEDBACK HIGHLIGHTS:

"I have downloaded some [tips from Dropbox] and they are helping me a lot. I go through some mostly when I am in traffic."

"The content of the calls was useful. It served as a reminder of what we learnt at the training."

"Outlining these leadership, business, and empowerment messages in the calls served as a quick guide to areas I need to pay attention to, both for my personal development and what I need to share with the entrepreneurs when we meet from time to time."