

Research Summary

A National Conversation: Governance in three African countries

Summary

- Funded by the UK's Department for International Development Governance Transparency Fund, BBC Media Action implements the governance project A National Conversation in Angola, Sierra Leone and Tanzania.
- In Angola and Sierra Leone, BBC Media Action has been producing and broadcasting radio output since 2010.
- Over 1 million people have been reached through the project's programming in Angola and Sierra Leone.¹
- 63% of regular² listeners in Angola and Sierra Leone combined think project programming is playing a key role in holding government to account.
- In Tanzania earlier this year, the project launched a weekly discussion programme on BBC Swahili called *Haba Na Haba* (Little By Little).



The project

Funded by the DFID Governance Transparency Fund, A National Conversation operates in Angola, Sierra Leone and Tanzania and aims to increase government transparency, accountability and public participation by way of the broadcast media.

In Angola, BBC Media Action has worked with Radio Ecclesia to produce the magazine programme *100 Duvidas* (100 Doubts) and the drama *Estrada Da Vida* (Streets Of Life)³. In Sierra Leone, BBC Media Action produces the national talk show *Fo Rod* (Crossroads) and uses *Fo Rod* as a training vehicle to help local partner stations produce their own governance programming. In August 2012, BBC Media Action started broadcasting the national debate programme *Tok Bot Salone* (Talk About Sierra Leone). In Tanzania, BBC Media Action has recently started working with the BBC Swahili service to produce the national discussion programme *Haba Na Haba* (Little By Little).

Research methodology

In 2011-2012 BBC Media Action conducted research with audiences in each of the three countries through surveys and qualitative panel discussions in the broadcast areas. In-depth interviews were conducted with partner station staff. All research aimed to explore how media serves as a driver of accountability and how the provision of platforms that provide information enables individuals, groups, communities and societies to make more informed choices and hold government and other decision makers to account.

¹ Reach figures are not available for Tanzania as the quantitative survey was completed before the launch of *Haba Na Haba*.

² A regular listener is defined as an audience member who listens to the weekly show at least twice per month

³ Since June 2012, *100 Duvidas* is now produced solely by Radio Ecclesia. Impact data used in this summary was collected up until May 2012.

Findings

A National Conversation is now in its fourth year and a body of evidence is emerging that demonstrates the impact project programming is having on public perceptions of government transparency, accountability and opportunities for public participation. Feedback from audiences of project radio programmes *Fo Rod* (Sierra Leone), *100 Duvidas* and *Estrada Da Vida* (Angola) and more recently *Haba Na Haba* (Tanzania) indicates that these shows are valuable tools for engaging audiences, disseminating information on local governance issues and fostering dialogue between government officials and the communities they serve.

Over 1 million people have been reached through project programming in Angola and Sierra Leone. Both media practitioners and audiences agree that the programmes are offering something new in their format and content and that this is attracting audiences.

“We don’t know what is going on. It’s only those that listen to this programme [Fo Rod] and others that know.”

Participant, Mara Audience Panel, Tonkolili, Sierra Leone

“The 100 Duvidas radio programme raises social issues and hears both parties: those who govern and those who are governed.”

Director General, Radio Ecclesia, Angola

In total, 66% of regular listeners to project programming in Angola and Sierra Leone said it helps resolve the issues it reports and 63% of regular listeners said it is playing a key role in holding government to account. Regular listeners trusted the information the programmes provide and many participants spoke of how the programmes had either provided them with new information or solved a problem they were facing.

In Tanzania in March 2012, the BBC Swahili service started broadcasting the new talk show *Haba Na Haba*. Practitioners are hopeful that this programme will break the tradition of one-sided dialogue between government and citizens where officials talk at citizens who have no forum in which leaders can hear what citizens have to say. Audiences reported seeing this change and said the programmes provide a forum to have their views heard by leaders and help hold leaders to account

Implications

In providing an opportunity for interaction between citizens and their leaders, BBC Media Action’s programmes in Angola, Sierra Leone and Tanzania are improving perceptions of accountability and transparency. They are also helping citizens to solve some of the problems they face either through direct intervention or by providing information citizens can use in their daily lives. Programming should continue to focus on this interaction, providing opportunities for citizens to speak to their government representatives and express their views on matters of importance to them.

Contact

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