

Research Summary

A National Conversation: Governance and media in Angola



Summary

- In Angola, BBC Media Action works with Radio Ecclesia to produce governance programming that aims to provide a forum for citizens to participate in governance discussions and increase public perceptions of an accountable and transparent government.
- BBC Media Action trains staff at Radio Ecclesia in production and journalism skills, including how to investigate issues impartially and present information that is useful to the audience.
- Staff at Radio Ecclesia said the training has enabled them to report issues critically and fairly and has shown them the importance of getting officials to answer citizens' concerns.
- 82% of regular listeners to the governance programme *100 Duvidas* said it is good or very good at raising awareness of ordinary citizen problems.
- 71% of regular listeners said the programmes are effective or very effective at making local government pay more attention to problems that the people care about.

Context

Angola emerged from civil war in 2002 and is still in the process of reconstruction. While the country is oil-rich, 50% of its population still lives below the poverty line.¹

Angola is formally a multi-party democracy. However, Jose Eduardo dos Santos of the Popular movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) has held the Presidency for 32 years. The state controls all nationwide media

in Angola and many of the private stations and private media outlets that criticise the government often encounter harassment and/or are penalised by anti-defamation statutes that do not allow “offensive” reporting.²



On 31 August 2012, Angola held parliamentary elections, with Jose Eduardo dos Santos of the MPLA securing another five years as President. The elections were said to be peaceful³, though some observers did express concerns over a lack of transparency they said left citizens unable to vote or reluctant to do so.⁴

The Project

The project in Angola is part of the BBC Media Action A National Conversation project. Funded by the UK's Department for International Development's 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. BBC Media Action works with the Catholic radio station Radio Ecclesia to build capacity and produce governance programming. As part of this partnership, the magazine programme *100 Duvidas* (100 Doubts)⁵ has been produced. BBC Media Action also works with the Forum of Women Journalists to produce the drama *Estrada Da Vida* (Streets Of Life) which is broadcast by Radio Ecclesia.

¹ http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/angola_statistics.html

² <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13036740>

³ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/sep/02/angola-ruling-party-wins-power>

⁴ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-19451376>

⁵ Since June 2012 *100 Duvidas* is now produced solely by Radio Ecclesia. Impact data-used in this summary was collected up until May 2012.

Methodology

In 2011-2012 BBC Media Action conducted research with audiences through a survey in Luanda as well as qualitative focus group discussions. This audience research was complimented by in-depth interviews with partner station staff. All research aimed to explore how media serves as a driver of domestic or institutional accountability and how the provision of platforms that provide information enable individuals, groups, communities and societies to make more informed choices and hold government and other decision makers to account.

Findings

In total, BBC Media Action has trained 150 staff at Radio Ecclesia in basic journalism, investigative journalism, package making and management. For those working at Radio Ecclesia this has transformed working practices. In November 2011, the director general of Radio Ecclesia spoke of the professionalism of his journalists and the impartiality of the station's output. Journalists working on *100 Duvidas* say they now investigate issues raised by audiences in calls to the station before contacting the authorities for the other side of the story.

"With 100 Duvidas I have learnt how to be critical about things and I am not superficial anymore. 100 Duvidas helps me to look at the background of the issues that affect society."

Reporter, *100 Duvidas*

Audiences appeared to appreciate these efforts. The programmes reach 315,147 people in Luanda and 82% of regular listeners⁶ said the programmes are very good at raising awareness of ordinary citizen problems. Many who contacted the station said they had failed to get resolution to their problems through official channels and programmes like *100 Duvidas* provide the only opportunity for ordinary citizens to get their problems heard and solved.

In group discussions, audiences said the drama reflected the reality of everyday life in Angola and was trying to change attitudes in society by teaching people how to live well with others in their community and respect each other. Some participants said the drama educated them about issues such as domestic violence, the importance of education and how to solve the problems they face day to day.



Implications

The quality of reporting and programming means citizens are contacting Radio Ecclesia, specifically the *100 Duvidas* team, to solve their problems. Several messages show citizens looking to *100 Duvidas* to ask officials about issues relevant to them, such as a lack of drinking water. An important shift in the power dynamics has taken place since the start of the *100 Duvidas* programme whereby previously hesitant elected officials now directly ask to participate in on air programming.

Contact

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Trish Doherty and Augusto Newell, July 2012

⁶ A regular listener is defined as an audience member who listens to the weekly show at least twice per month