

Third Annual Reports: Web Updates

GTF077 The BBC World Service Trust

'A National Conversation' is a five-year project that seeks to promote government transparency, accountability and public participation across three African countries. Working in Angola, Sierra Leone and Tanzania, the project aims to harness the media to improve opportunities for citizens to be informed about and check government decisions, and voice their views and needs on governance issues.

National Conversations are taking hold across Tanzania, Sierra Leone and Angola, where the media is being used to get ordinary people talking about the issues which matter to them most. Thanks to the introduction of innovative interactive radio programming which doesn't exist elsewhere, people are able to voice their opinions in public for the first time, asking questions directly to elected leaders and informing themselves about important governance issues.

In Sierra Leone, one *Fo Rod* listener talks about how the programmes are educational and provide them with information they had not known previously:

'It shows us that the monies that are given to the chiefs are not accounted for, especially in our own districts'.

In Angola, one journalist involved in consumer watchdog programme *100 Duvidas* (100 Doubts) talks about how surprised he is to have officials engaging with the show and offering answers to some of the many problems encountered by listeners:

'I did not think it was possible to look at social problems and find a solution...we couldn't even imagine officials would talk with us'.

In Tanzania, the BBC WST supported national broadcaster TBC to deliver impartial information during the election. One listener describes how flagship programme *Mchakato Majimboni* (constituency debates) provided opportunities to understand what each candidate was promising and help ordinary people hold the elected officials to account after the election:

'This is a very wonderful programme. We have seen every candidate stating their policies and explaining themselves, what they would do for the citizens if elected and the citizens have also asked questions'.

In its first three years, the project has been extremely successful in creating a dialogue between citizens and government officials throughout the project's programming. This is due in large part to the high quality participatory radio co-productions developed with partner stations in all three countries, and the intensive training and mentoring of local partner station staff over the project period. Audiences have been enabled to voice their views and needs in relation to governance issues, and in addition there have been some strong examples of positive government response and engagement in the project programming. The project will continue to build on this engagement during the second half of the project, with a view to exploring new approaches to improving government accountability, as well as transparency and participation.

For further information on this programme, please visit

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/trust/whatwedo/where/africa/2010/09/100811_a_national_conversation_gtf_project_overview.shtml