



PDev II

Amplifying Moderate Voices in West Africa

One way to counter the dark appeal of extremism is to raise the profile of more moderate voices within a community. The Peace through Development II (PDev II) program has therefore been supporting integrated radio, social media, civic-education and conflict-resolution activities that disseminate credible information and encourage positive dialogue in Burkina Faso, Chad and Niger.

PDev II has engaged influential religious and traditional leaders in all three countries, training them on topics such as religious tolerance, civic responsibility and peace-building. Other community leaders have also received training on topics such as communication, non-violent conflict resolution and leadership. Trainings on moderate civic values were conducted for teachers of Quranic schools.

Because radio programming can be a critical means of behavioral change, the PDev II program has produced a range of shows and supported a network of 74 partner radio stations to develop their own original programming. The resulting nearly 4,000 hours of programming have reached more than five million listeners across the three countries.

Using Radio Programs to Spark Positive Actions

The sketches, mini-dramas and full-length soap operas produced by PDev II staff or by partner stations broach sensitive topics that are inherent in community members' real-life struggles. Moreover, the characters model strategies that help listeners resolve actual conflicts. Episodes are sometimes drawn from conversations between community reporters and citizens and have touched on topics such as how to disassociate oneself from extremist family members, the ethnic insularity of certain neighborhoods, and the exploitation of women in terrorist attacks.



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2015 PDev II RADIO

Estimated reach of
5.2 million
in core listening zones
& regular audience of
2.6 million

213 hours
of content
produced
for **426**
episodes
of youth radio series
in local languages

3,741
hours
on-air
across program
core zones via
50+ community
radio partners

4,222 countering
violent extremism
conversations
initiated by trained
Community Reporters

In addition to its regular programming, the PDev II media team has responded to urgent needs arising from current events. For instance, in 2015 it produced radio PSA-style “spots” and a “micro-program” throughout core zones in Burkina Faso, encouraging residents to participate peacefully in upcoming presidential elections. Special episodes were also produced by the media teams in all three countries in response to the Ebola crisis, to disseminate information about the disease and how to avoid contracting it. In Chad, a show was produced to respond to high civilian-police tensions. It sought to promote the peaceful acceptance of new laws against wearing veils that fully cover the face, and featured interviews with a mayor, the Secretary General of the Islamic High Council and a university professor.

Participating radio stations have also aired roundtable discussions and call-in shows on topics related to local risk factors of violent extremism, such as the role of women in combating such activities, the dangers of illegal gold mining, and calming student tensions on a university campus. The programs have featured a diverse array of local moderate leaders, including hospital administrators, tribal chiefs, professors and mayors.

In addition to shows in local languages, member stations have also produced a regional French-language program called “Reflets du Sahel.” Episodes are based on conversations with moderate leaders and citizens across the region and are aired on stations throughout the three PDev II countries.

Another source of programming was a radio theater contest in Chad, which drew an enthusiastic response from more than a dozen troupes. The winning dramas—about

the recruitment of youth by Boko Haram, violence in schools and herder-farmer conflicts—were broadcast by partner radio stations to listeners across the country.

Engaging a Wide Audience

Call-in shows have provided an opportunity for thousands of listeners to express their views. Now, improved Interactive Voice Response (IVR) and SMS systems are serving to provide further engagement opportunities. The IVR system allows callers to hear information about a show; participate in a monthly show poll; leave a message for the producers; or listen to a short excerpt from a recent program. In Niger and Burkina, the system received 400 and 4,000 calls respectively in just the first few weeks. In another sign of positive impact, episodes airing after the Charlie Hebdo attacks inspired passionate feedback from listeners who called in to express their outrage over the resulting violence in Niger in January 2015.

To help the stations in these endeavors, PDev II has supplied production and broadcasting equipment, as well as training in production techniques, equipment repair and maintenance and professional ethics. The PDev II program has also constructed three radio stations and installed five radio towers in Niger.

One listener in Chad thanked PDev II for organizing a radio debate and said that local populations had been so terrified by Boko Haram that they wouldn’t say the name aloud. The debate provided the first opportunity for them to speak openly about their fears. Myriad listeners said PDev II radio programs had contributed to peace-keeping efforts in their communities.



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