

PROJECT RADIO SIDA

In 2003 The National HIV AIDS Committee of Madagascar (Comité Nationale de Lutte Contre le SIDA – CNLS) requested that the Trust commence HIV awareness via its radio networks in southern Madagascar.

Project Radio SIDA was launched in January 2004 as a six month pilot. Two radio producers were trained to develop the programming using participatory techniques and to specialise in the technical aspects of communicating the risks and prevention strategies for HIV.

PROGRAMME PRODUCTION

Over the next two years the project scaled up to produce and broadcast more than 78 educational radio programmes on a range of HIV themes from the explanation of the virus, transmission and prevention, through to the promotion of local services which can support people with their enquiries and needs.



Further programming and a small mini soap opera have been produced and broadcast under the auspices of the Trust's [Drought Mitigation Programme](#), demonstrating the Trust's commitment to maintaining and increasing HIV awareness and recognising the importance of helping local people to protect themselves, and their efforts to develop a sustainable future, from the threat of the disease.

Evaluation of the HIV radio programmes was carried out for CNLS and also as part of the DFID funded Project Radio evaluation. See also Project Radio.

TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

The project also provided training to local and national partners. 16 local radio journalists and 10 regional co-ordinators for the National Committee for HIV Awareness (CNLS) were trained in participatory programme production on HIV themes.

To assist the training programme and share lessons learnt with other radio journalists across the island, Project Radio SIDA produced a specialised training manual. This outlined participatory approaches for developing educational broadcasts on HIV and was given to the local partners as well as to the CNLS national office to distribute to partners in other regions.



INCREASED ACCESS TO HIV PROGRAMMING



In 2006 the project was contracted by CNLS to distribute 2,000 wind up /solar powered radio to communities across the Provinces of Toliara and Fianarantsoa, setting up dedicated listening groups who could then receive national and local radio broadcasts about HIV AIDS.

Villagers find it hard to purchase radios and afford batteries, so the wind up solutions are appropriate socially as well as environmentally.

An evaluation of the distribution process was carried out in 2007 and results were shared with CNLS partners at national level. CNLS identified ALT as a 'Best Practise' partner.

MAKING PROGRAMMES WORK FOR RURAL LISTENERS

The project has taken a strictly participative approach researching local beliefs, sexual attitudes and behaviours, and traditional relationships such as 'blood brothers'. The programmes have been made in local languages (Androy and Anosy) to ensure interest and understanding, were pre-tested with listening groups before broadcast and have also used local analogies to get the message across. For example:



As 95% of the local target groups are illiterate, they greatly appreciate simple explanations which help them to understand the level of risk– particularly in this region where traditional beliefs attribute illnesses to spirit possession. In order to provide a simple and accessible explanation to the rural population as to how the HIV virus attacks the body leading to AIDS, an early Projet Radio SIDA programme sought examples borne out of peoples' daily lives. The programme used a simple analogy from local farming practice where fields are protected by natural fencing of local cactus plants – the raketa mena.

In the programme the raketa cactus is presented as Helper T-cells that fight off illness in the body, represented as a field, and insects representing the HIV virus.

This programme was comprised of a dialogue between two women speaking in local Antandroy dialect, where one woman explains how the insects (HIV virus) can ravage the cactus (antibody), causing subsequent damage to the field (the body) which the cactus protects - as a consequence, subsequent opportunistic infections (represented by animals familiar to the region) can then enter and destroy the body.

Pre-testing was conducted prior to broadcast, and people were able to identify the key messages that arose out of the programme, as well as mentioning that the locale and communication format connected closely to their lives. In final evaluations in the villages, this analogy was the second-highest recalled programme in the Androy region. One village listening group commented:



"The broadcast [raketa cactus analogy] helped us a lot, especially when she took an example from our daily lives and she used the cactus, the field, and other enemies of our culture, and we really appreciated it."

EVENTS AND PARTNERSHIP



Festivals and events present an excellent opportunity to share information. The project has participated in a number of musical events locally and regionally where it has distributed information and condoms.

For example, in 2004 Projet Radio SIDA (PR/SIDA) teamed up with Population Services International (PSI) to support the musician Tonton Mazavafo on his music tour in the south of Madagascar. Tonton's music repertoire highlighted social issues relevant to the region; health, lack of water, deforestation, famine, and issues on sexual health. His songs focused strongly on HIV/AIDS and precautionary measures that people can take when faced with this illness.

Population Services International donated 3,000 condoms to the tour which were distributed by the Project Radio SIDA team, alongside public demonstrations about how to use the condoms and information leaflets translated into local Antandroy dialect.

A young man, aged 18, attending the concert remarked to the Projet Radio SIDA team **"I didn't believe in HIV/ AIDS before today. But after talking with you and getting this, [handout and condom leaflet] I believe it now"**.