



YOUTH TALK

EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH MEDIA IN MALI, CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, AND SOUTH SUDAN.

Mali, South Sudan, and the Central African Republic have all recently signed peace agreements. However, these present many challenges, partly because negotiations have mainly been confined to the voice of the adult elite. Indeed, young people in all three countries feel that they have no opportunity to express themselves.

Today, things are changing. Through our regional project "Youth Talk," young people make their voices heard in their communities. Trained in the production and facilitation of interactive radio programs, they address the burning social and political issues of their respective countries.

SELECTION OF THE YOUNG PARTICIPANTS



A total of 132 young women and men were selected to participate in the project in its first year. This includes 90 young Malians from different neighborhoods in Bamako, 30 young people from Bangui and Bambari in the Central African Republic and 12 young South Sudanese.

Community consultations in the three countries resulted in the selection of many hard-to-reach adolescents, representing displaced persons, religious diversity, albinos, blind youth, and street children.

YOUTH

YOUTH-LED AUDIENCE RESEARCH



TALK

All 132 adolescents in the three countries were trained in audience research methodology. This training took place in December 2019 in South Sudan, followed by the Central African Republic and Mali in February 2020. The module aimed to prepare young journalists to identify and engage with their target audience(s) and assess their information needs and interests, assess which programs are relevant and appropriate for them, understand how young people participate in their communities and with the media, and identify key stakeholders to include in their radio program.

In each country, the training was followed by field research conducted by the young participants.

Respondents cited parental neglect (28.14 percent), domestic violence (24.4 percent), peer group influence (21.1 percent) and forced marriages (2 percent) as the leading causes of the high rate of street children.



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YOUNG JOURNALISTS TRAINING

In this first year, all the young participants from South Sudan, Central African Republic, and Mali have completed the four-part training series. The training aimed to build their capacity in the Common Ground Approach, audience research methods, basic journalism techniques, and radio production.

“I learned a lot during my training. The module I appreciated was the one on identity, which showed that all human beings have their own identity, different but also things in common. Knowing this can help solve problems between people” - Jospin, Bangui, Central African Republic.



"I did not know how to deal with conflict, but now I have learned that when a person has a problem with another person, you have to sit on a round table and solve the problem by dialogue. I thank Search for Common Ground for this as South Sudan has been in wars since the time of our grandfathers, mothers but they haven't come up with any solution." - Awur Dorcus, South Sudan

“My handicap is not a fatality [...]. The project has made me realize that I can also play a crucial role in my country. It allows me to acquire new knowledge and talk about disabled people’s rights who suffer a lot in Mali.”- Abel, 17, visually impaired.

YOUTH-LED RADIO PRODUCTION

By the end of July 2020, 12 radio programs had been produced and broadcast in Mali, while the Central African Republic produced six programs in Bangui and three in Bambari. Last but not least, South Sudan has created and broadcast 18 radio programs since 14 March.

A 17-year-old girl said: “We interacted with many young people by marketing the Lugara Shabab with banners, during radio interviews and monitoring visits. Now I even dare to speak freely to the elders”.



CONSULTATIVE WORKSHOPS

To foster community ownership of the project and build bridges between adults and adolescents, we tried a “home visit” approach in Mali. Young people could meet in each other’s homes on a rotating basis.

In this way, most of the parents gained more confidence in the project and felt free to join the young people’s discussions. As a result, we organized 24 consultation sessions in Mali between adolescents and adults in the six communes.



— Bintou



"My older sister's an albino like me. But it's not a problem for us, we have a lot of friends, and nobody bothers us," says Bintou. From an early age, Bintou has been singing slam to promote the rights of people with albinism. "For me, slam allows me to talk about the issues I care about the most. Through my songs, I often call on the Malian authorities to make schools more accessible to visually-impaired albino children from less well-off families. Education is a right for all children," she says. Bintou is barely 14 years old, but she is already well known to the general public and is a leading figure in the protection of

albino children. As part of the "Youth Talk" project, Bintou co-hosts radio programs with other youth, enabling her to be heard by even more people. "Like my sister, I love journalism. We often listen to Aunt Oumou Diarra's programs on national radio, and I want to become like her. I think this project will make my dream come true, which is to speak out on the radio and say what albino children like me need. For example, we need good eye care and glasses. They are expensive, and my parents can't afford them. I want to help albinos have the chance to succeed in life," concludes Bintou.

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Bonjour à tous,
cette semaine de la pensée de
cette semaine est
"en paix avec l'univers."
"de pensée moi-même."
invités à être
des femmes de
l'avenir du pays
des femmes de
l'avenir du pays

“People don’t respect the measures imposed by the authorities because of the rumors circulating that COVID-19 disease is a lie. We need to convince people of its existence through the testimonies of those affected. Without this prior step, any prevention effort will be a waste of time,” - Abel, Mali.



COVID-19 CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

The spread of COVID-19 in the three target countries in March-April 2020 resulted in restrictions that delayed some project activities such as the consultation sessions. Most parents have been unwilling to send their children to participate in project activities. Despite this challenging situation, Youth Talk participants have used their growing popularity in communities to raise awareness about the pandemic.



