

# Reaching Everybody

## **A Spotlight on How to Expand Your Spread Through Radio**

Through this Spotlight we examine a creative method through which to reach children and families. The medium is Radio.

Four implementation teams were asked to share their experiences of using radio to communicate with the community. Their responses explore why they chose Radio, and provide suggestions on how to turn the idea into a reality.

We hope this Spotlight will help you explore the potential contribution and value of Radio in your context.

## Meet : Christina Bwana from Ubongo

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In her previous capacity as CPO, Christina was overseeing content creation across multiple media platforms including radio, ensuring learning objectives are conveyed and understood through the different platforms.



### **Why have you chosen to use radio?**

In Africa, radio penetration is higher than TV penetration, with more lower income households having access to Radio than TV. Ubongo wants to reach those harder to reach households and those communities such as refugee settlements, and to reach as many as possible, so radio was an obvious platform to also concentrate our efforts on.

### **How does radio fit into your overall program?**

All our episodes have the radio version, edited so that it is suitable for radio consumption. We started with TV, but have now not only caught up with a radio version of all our content, but also have created a specific radio program (PlayMatters) for refugee settlements across different countries in Africa.

### **How are you using radio to reach your communities?**

Through partnering with local radio stations and studios we have adapted our content into the local languages and broadcast on their radio stations.

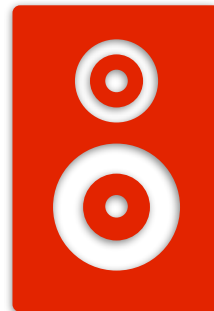
We have different radio programs. some are adapted from our TV programs (thus teaching social education and STEM/pre numeracy/pre

literacy) but PlayMatters also helps children and parents learn how to use their everyday surroundings and objects in their environment to learn and have fun learning.

**What are lessons learned – both positive and negative?**

Specific to Ubongo, our lessons learnt are:

- Children's content is not a priority for many broadcasters, who do not allocate enough money to children's content.
- National broadcasters are usually very bureaucratic.
- Launches can take very long sometimes to achieve.
- We are one of a very few organisations creating localised African content and this has resulted in us being sought after by those who value this material.



## Meet: Aida Alonzo - Development Media international

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Aida works as Senior Strategy Development Manager, designing projects that reach audiences in low-income countries with messaging over radio, TV and mobile channels to improve public health outcomes. DMI has scientifically proven that mass media can change life-saving behaviours.



### Why have you chosen to use radio?

We were convinced that radio would be a highly impactful approach for the *Enfance* project in Cote d'Ivoire for the following three reasons:

**1. Evidence base:** DMI has shown to the highest scientific standards that its radio campaign is able to positively influence caregiving behaviours. A randomised controlled trial was conducted in Burkina Faso from 2011-2015 to assess the effectiveness of a campaign that encouraged caregivers to seek treatment for children exhibiting the symptoms of diarrhoea, malaria and pneumonia. In the first year of the campaign, we saw increases in treatment seeking for these illnesses of 73%, 56% and 39% respectively (all  $p < 0.001$ ) (Murray et al., 2018). Modelling suggests that the three year campaign saved approximately 3,000 children's lives, making it one of the most cost-effective child health interventions available (Kasteng et al., 2018).

**2. Reach and intensity:** the *Enfance* radio campaign broadcast messages 10 times per day and reached approximately 2 million radio listeners.

**3. Quality:** the radio spots were informed by in-depth formative research conducted in the

intervention areas and were in a dramatic format that engaged and entertained listeners to persuade them to change their attitudes and behaviours regarding exclusive breastfeeding and complimentary feeding. All spots were pre-tested on target audiences to optimise them to the local context. Radio allows for standardisation of quality, as we broadcast these tried and tested spots to a wide audience.

### **How does radio fit into your overall program?**

The radio campaign is complemented by a mobile video intervention, which is focused on early childhood development. Mobile videos, encouraging caregiver behaviours to promote the cognitive development of young children, are shared with caregivers through a network of 90 local midwives and nurses. The videos are dubbed into local languages and shared on SD cards and via Bluetooth, so sharing does not rely on internet, which is often prohibitively expensive for these communities. Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA), are conducting a randomised controlled trial in 100 intervention villages and 100 control villages to evaluate the effect of the mobile videos on nurturing care behaviours that stimulate early child development. In order to avoid contaminating the randomised controlled trial, we separated out the messaging for each channel, so the radio campaign was focused on nutrition behaviours and the mobile video intervention was focused on nurturing care behaviours.

### **How are you using radio to reach your communities?**

We are broadcasting through a network of 27 community radio stations that were selected on the basis of an in-depth scoping exercise that took into account a range of factors such as transmitter strength, broadcast languages and

airtime rates. We broadcast 60 second radio spots 10 times per day on each of these stations. A total of 12 spots were produced in French and 6 other local languages, and 6 of these spots were also produced in 2 extra languages in response to the request of the listeners.

### **What are lessons learned – both positive and negative?**

#### Negatives:

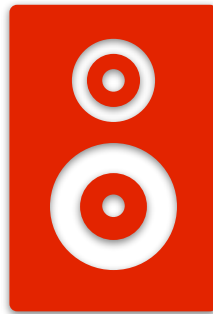
- Direct reach of radio messages was lower than expected.
- Certain socio-cultural beliefs associated with giving meat to children continue to be barriers to full adoption of messages related to complementary feeding. Some mothers and caregivers reported not giving meat to children <2 years because they associate it with the child becoming a thief, liar, being demanding, or authoritarian.
- It was also difficult to influence the practice of giving water to infants under 6 months old.

#### Positives:

- More indirect exposure to the radio campaign messages than expected:
  1. Midwives – one of the main sources of information for women about breastfeeding, and conveyed the campaign messages.
  2. Health workers and social workers – used the messages as an opportunity to emphasise measures such as breastfeeding and food supplements during pre-natal and post-natal consultations.
  3. Community leaders (village/district chiefs) – there was mobilisation of local channels to disseminate the information, e.g. public megaphones, pastors.
- Women and caregivers had more confidence in radio messages on infant feeding when it

is those around them or family members who advised them to listen to the radio messages or explained the content of the spots.

- Increase in knowledge about exclusive breastfeeding and complementary feeding was reflected in behaviour change, especially in the context of complimentary feeding. For example: attempts to increase the diversity of food groups offered to the children was reported.
- Socio-cultural changes such as mens' engagement in accelerating behaviour change, and not offering food consumed by adults to children <6months, a practice entrenched in the community, were also noted.



## Meet Huzeima Mahamadu - Lively Minds



Huziema, as National Government Stakeholder Manager is responsible for supporting national government officials within the Ghana Education Service to oversee the implementation of the radio programme at the local level.



### Why have you chosen to use radio?

The Lively Minds Together Radio Programme was chosen as a quick response to keep KG children in hard-to-reach rural communities learning during the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic with the attendant restrictions and school closures.

Specifically, the purpose was to;

- ✓ Use local language radio to get practical and engaging information to rural parents
- ✓ Empower parents to provide early learning and care at home, using available cost free local materials
- ✓ Complement and support distance learning initiatives by government
- ✓ Create an enabling home-learning environment for learners of all ages

### How does radio fit into your overall program?

- The radio programme delivers the same material we used in centres, and is used to promote the resumption of our original play scheme and our scaling plans
- Lively Minds already has a comprehensive parenting syllabus designed for rural parents that has been proven through an independent RCT to improve school readiness and parental involvement in learning



- This programme is going to be scaled to 8 regions, 60 districts, and 4000 communities over the next 3 years in partnership with Ghana Education Service GES as the implementing government agency. Lively Minds and GES signed an MOU in August 2019 to roll out this scaling strategy.
- The Lively Minds programme already operates through a training of trainers' model- training GES staff and Kindergarten Teachers to deliver the programme. Lively Minds have the expertise in quality assuring a cascade delivery approach
- The programme MOU, partnership agreement, and scripts were quickly adapted for radio by GES and Lively Minds to scale the radio programme to the 8 regions.
- Rural parents listen to the radio, which is easily accessible to most households, acquire parenting and play knowledge to support their families and children

**How are you using radio to reach your communities?**

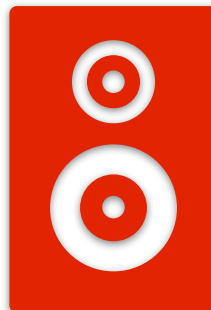
- Lively minds Trains GES to set up Regional and District Radio Teams
- Districts appoint 8 teachers (referred to as Star Presenters – SPs) who are fluent in their respective languages
- Lively Minds provides radio scripts and uses the training of trainers approach to train and support the GES LMT regional and District Radio Teams to deliver the radio programme.
- The Star Presenters are trained by the District Radio Teams under the supervision/ support of the Regional Radio Teams to record radio episodes in play and parenting topics in local languages for broadcast by radio stations

- Lively Minds provide ongoing support (financial and technical) to facilitate training and coaching of the teachers in recording and delivery of live interactive shows
- Play and Parenting topics/episodes are aired during prime times to empower parents to support their children's learning at home
- The radio show has successfully aired more than 16 radio episode to date in 16 local languages, covering 18 districts within 8 regions, using local radio stations.
- There is a National Working group that over sees the implementation of the programme and advises the government.

**What are lessons learned – both positive and negative?**

- The radio show was timely in responding to parents' needs, especially those in the rural areas during the peak of Covid-19 and school closures.
- Radio increases accessibility and draws parents closer to teachers. The interactive sessions allow listeners/parents to provide feedback on the effectiveness of the programme and ask questions for feedback from teachers
- The radio programme, according to listeners, made them better parents, and the felt better able to cope with Covid-19 and take care of the nutritional and hygiene needs of their families.
- The commitment and role of teachers and district officials within the Ghana Education Service are critical to the success of the radio programme

- Buy-in and approval of the traditional authorities is essential in choosing a local language to broadcast in
- There are financial compliance challenges in districts and regions
- There are competing demands on GES staff time to perform competing duties and run the radio show as well.
- Network challenges sometimes makes it difficult for the Star presenters to call into the Radio station to deliver the interactive live sessions. It also limits the number phone ins by the listeners
- Some of the community radio stations have limited coverage and are not able to reach all the communities
- Implementation activities are sometimes disrupted by the unplanned nature of some GES activities
- Buy in by some GES staff is still a challenge



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## Meet Diane Uwamahoro & Noella Kabarungi - Save the Children



Diane is the Program Coordinator of the First Steps project radio program. Her role focuses on providing oversight of the project implementation, technical support to the implementing partner, co-leading the design and implementation of the effective monitoring and evaluation system.



Noella as a Monitoring Evaluation Accountability and Learning (MEAL) specialist works with the Radio program to ensure that the MEAL system improves the quality of the.



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### Why have you chosen to use radio?

We chose radio because it is highly accessible in Rwanda. The DHS survey completed at the start of the First Steps program showed that over 60% of the population owned a radio set. Parents and other community members reported that radio was one of the top two sources of information on health, nutrition and early learning. In addition, radio dramas and audio soap operas are popular with the Rwandan community. One radio soap, Urunana, has run for over 20 years and remains popular. With this understanding we planned to embed radio in the First Steps intervention from the start.

First Steps is a social behavior change intervention to promote healthy early childhood

development for children below 3 years old. The First Steps intervention in Rwanda recognizes the importance of parental support and aims to enable parents to become more effective providers of care and support for their children. The project targets improvement in parenting practices, child development outcomes, and an increase in emergent literacy activities in the home. The program reaches parents through community parenting sessions, the radio show, and home visits. Parents who listen to the radio sessions will hear ECD messages and suggestions for activities built into the story. It is a highly-accessible and cost-effective technology in the Rwandan context. During COVID19 pandemic radio has been used as a stand alone component for families outside of the First Steps Intervention sites in Rwanda.

**How are you using radio to reach your communities?**

To reach the communities, Save the Children contracted local radio stations in the country that have a strong signal in the intervention districts to air the mp3 files at scheduled times of the week over a 17 week period. Before COVID-19, Save the Children had contracted 2 local radio stations and the session was aired every week during the active parenting sessions period.

In response to the current pandemic, the team expanded the radio program to national level by increasing a number of local radio stations from 2 to 8 to reach as many families as possible in the country.

Furthermore, to facilitate home based individual family listening, as opposed to the previous format of group listening, more than 1200 solar radio sets were provided to vulnerable families.

For a few villages where FM radio signal was not accessible the 17 sessions were loaded onto flash drives and given to families to listen using radio sets with capability to play mp3 content from flash drives.

**What are lessons learned – both positive and negative?**

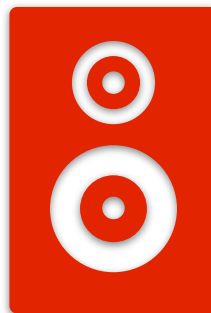
The following lessons learned were collected through regular monitoring activities, qualitative and quantitative evaluations:

- It is possible to reach very many parents using Radio technology, and Radio programming has an impact on parenting attitudes especially on bonding, stimulation, and responsive caring messages.
- Radio listening was found to be one of the variables with a high positive correlation to change in parents' attitudes, skills, and practices alongside attending parenting sessions.
- Radio reinforces learning for parents when they listen to the radio program in parenting sessions especially because they are able to reflect together and ask questions of each other.
- Ensuring that the radio program is culturally appropriate, uses language that is accessible to the community and portrays authentic and realistic community experiences is very important. One of the positive feedbacks we get about First Steps radio is that the characters are both funny and relatable, while also do not sound like people from one particular region of Rwanda. The characters manage to be relatable to Rwandan people from all walks of life.
- One-way radio listening alone is not enough. It is important to create an interactive, two way communication mechanism to allow

reflection on the content in order to move from knowledge to practice and behavior change.

- Parents have also shared that they prefer to listen to the radio as a group instead of the individual listening. They enjoy reflecting on the radio session as a group, to hear the experiences and learning of others through group discussions.
- Two-way communication can be achieved by adding face-to-face discussion and reflection during group sessions or home visits, remote discussions via phone or social media etc.
  
- There is a need to have strong monitoring and complaints response systems in order to receive and respond to complaints from beneficiaries on time.
- Through the toll free hotline we are able to get feedback from parents and they have consistently said radio is reinforcing their learning.
- In terms of planning, the team learned that it is important to anticipate that there will be problems with technology so implementers need to be given options of what to do if the technology, in case the radio does not work, or the local radio station doesn't air the radio session of the day.
- The reception of local radio stations is patchy in rural areas. This prompted us to provide off-air options on flash drives for those few villages with poor radio reception.
- When working with private radio stations it is important to have very strict conditions in the contract of what happens if a radio station fails to air the program, or fails to air at the agreed time.

- It is also important to have staff monitoring the airing and quality of radio signals in different regions in order to troubleshoot challenges.
- The development of radio materials is an intensive process so it is best to either outsource production or build in enough time to write scripts , participate/ supervise recordings and do quality checks.
- On the practical side, knowledge management, including managing and keeping final versions of scripts within the organization, and not with the private consultant, is very important especially if future adaptations are to be made without repeating the whole production process.



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For further insights from our Contributors please listen to the recording of the Webinar -

**March 31: How Radio Can Strengthen Your Reach**

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Which can be found on the website.

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