

Expanding and Supporting the Media Sector in Ethiopia

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I. Project Overview

Given Pact's considerable experience with the media sector in Ethiopia, Pact developed a proposal requesting funding support from CEEPS/NDI. The project began in early February 2009. The project had two major components: supporting the Media Forum; and expanding community radio broadcasting. In the first component the project aimed to develop a sustainable Media Forum that will contribute to building a professional media and work toward creating space for independent media, and contribute to efforts to create a press council and code of conduct in order to promote self regulation of the media sector. The second project component focused on developing sustainable and replicable models of community broadcasting that will contribute to expanding the availability of accurate information in a forum that allows diverse populations to share information and generate discussions; and developing radio programming that contributes to the social and economic development of communities across Ethiopia. The overall goal of these two project components was to strengthen the media sector and significantly increase the ability of the media to reach out and communicate effectively within Ethiopia.

The objectives of the program were:

I. Support to the Media Forum and the Promotion of Self Regulation

The project component has the following two objectives:

1. Develop a sustainable Media Forum that will contribute to building a professional media and work toward creating space for independent media; and
2. Contribute to efforts to create a press council and code of conduct in order to promote self regulation of the media sector.

II: Support to Community Radio

This project component has the following two objectives:

1. Develop sustainable and replicable models of community broadcasting that will contribute to expanding the availability of accurate information in a forum that allows diverse populations to share information and generate discussions; and
2. Develop radio programming that contributes to the social and economic development of communities across Ethiopia.

As part of the first project component, Pact, through its USAID-funded Constructive Dialogue Initiative (CDI) project, facilitated media activities, which were comprised of technical assistance to the newly enacted press law and the draft freedom of information law, and the creation of an informal "Media Forum" open to all media stakeholders. Prior to this project, the Media Forum had held over 30 meetings, workshops and media seminars that analyzed the draft press law and prepared position papers of the law. At the start of the project, the Media Forum had drafted Articles of Incorporation and was in the process of registering itself as a legal entity. The creation of the Media Forum was based on the need to form a strong organization for

Ethiopian journalists from all sectors that could assist the media to raise the bar on the level of professionalism for media practitioners, develop a code of ethics, and provide input to the government on the press law. With the support of this project, the Media Forum was committed to continuing this work through strengthening the professional field of journalism and promoting independent media self regulation through work on a Code of Conduct and developing an Independent Press Council.

In relation to the second component, building on Pact's media work, this project was designed to develop the newly emerging community radio sector. Community radio is one of the best tools for reaching rural and vulnerable communities for the purpose of both the dissemination as well as assimilation of pertinent information using local languages and customs. Radio is the medium of choice, reaching the rural areas where most Ethiopians live. Therefore, community radio, as it has in many countries, serves as a forum and offers opportunities for sharing information and generating discussion among Ethiopia's diverse populations. This component was designed to develop sustainable and replicable models of community radio broadcasting that would contribute to expanding the availability of accurate information in a forum that allows diverse populations to share information and generate discussions. Additionally, this component was designed to develop radio programming that contributes to the social and economic development of communities across Ethiopia.

II. Project Activities per Objectives

Objective 1 Support to the Media Forum and the Promotion of Self Regulation

The preliminary step taken to develop a sustainable media forum during the project period was to support the revitalization of the Media Forum. As part of this process, eight consultative meetings were held with the Steering Committee of the Media Forum. During the first meeting, the Steering Committee agreed on a number of critical revitalization and formalization issues including: conducting a plenary (General Assembly) meeting; focusing on the registration process of the Media Forum; and organizing a planning and strategy workshop with a focus on media self regulation.

Two local consultants, Debebe H/Gebriel and Geleta Simesso, were hired to assist the Media Forum. Ato Debebe worked with the Media Forum to draft their registration documents and their Code of Ethics and Media Council Constitution. Additionally, Pact and Ebert Stiftung (FES) shared the costs of an international consultant who was brought to Addis to present at the Media Forum's plenary meeting on international media best practices which was held in July 2009. The international consultant also worked with the Media Forum to improve the Forum's draft documents on the Code of Ethics and Media Council Constitution.

A total of 55 media professionals attended the Media Forum's plenary meeting in July. During the meeting the Steering Committee outlined the objectives and activities of the Media Forum to date and future activities. The Chairperson of the Steering Committee outlined the registration process and where the Media Forum was in the process of registration. The Steering Committee attributed the delay in registration to the fact that the Charities and Societies Agency (CSA) was not accepting registration applications at this time. However, he was confident that once the

CSA was operating that the Media Forum would get registered. The delay in registration of the Media Forum kept planned project activities to support the Media Forum on hold. Until the Media Forum was registered, Pact did not provide infrastructure support and only provided limited technical assistance that included assistance for: the registration process; drafting the Code of Council on Self Regulation; and developing a future strategy.

After a series of lengthy debates and analysis in the Media Forum meetings, the Steering Committee developed and drafted a Code of Ethics and Media Council Constitution. Pact provided technical assistance to the Media Forum to assist in the development and preparation of these documents. It was hoped that these documents would play a critical role in promoting media self regulation and support the envisaged Ethiopian Media Council (EMC). It was a great achievement that these documents were drafted ahead of schedule. The Steering Committee held a meeting shortly after the plenary meeting to discuss the draft documents and incorporated the comments that were discussed during the meeting. At the meeting, the members discussed how to present the documents to the entire media sector. Additionally, the Media Forum was working on conducting a forum to present the documents and a best practices trip was being planned to Tanzania to review their work in this area.

Apart from the regular Media Forum meetings, the Steering Committee in mid-August, at the request of the USAID DG Chief of Office and the British Foreign Office, invited all media professionals (including those that were not members of the Media Forum) and the National Election Board Ethiopia (NEBE) to discuss possible media capacity building activities in the lead up to the elections. At the first meeting, the media professionals were not clear if they wanted assistance in the lead up to the elections or if they needed capacity building in this area. Some activities that were suggested by the British Foreign Office included: election coverage ethics/framework for journalistic standards; improving media access to information on the electoral process; investigative journalism and conflict sensitive reporting. The participants at the meeting were requested to think about their capacity building needs and report back at a second meeting that would be held the following week. At the second, the participants requested assistance with capacity-building activities in the run up to the elections. It was agreed that the British Council would support a mapping exercise that would identify gaps and areas that the media felt they needed assistance during the election period. It was agreed that once this assessment was conducted another meeting would be scheduled to discuss the findings with the media.

On Saturday, August 29, a negative opinion article in the government newspaper ran about USAID and the two meetings hosted by the Media Forum. The article was titled “USAID’s Embarrassing Meddling in the Ethiopian Media.” This article directly quoted discussions from the meeting and was highly inflammatory. This article was followed on Sunday by a TV program on ETV and a radio program on Ethiopian Radio that discussed the topic again in an inflammatory manner. A few days later another op ed article ran in the government paper that accused USAID of trying to incite an “Orange Revolution.”

Following these articles, USAID requested that Pact’s Constructive Dialogue Program put on hold all activities including the media activities under this project. NDI was notified of the problem and the request by USAID to put all the activities on hold, pending an upcoming retreat.

Pact conducted the one-day retreat where Pact reviewed all of its activities under both the Constructive Dialogue Initiative Program and this media program. Pact reviewed all the activities on a case by case basis to determine which activities should continue in light of these allegations against USAID and its DG programming especially focusing on the media activities. Following the retreat, Pact met with USAID and reviewed all of its activities. At this meeting in late September, USAID and Pact agreed to resume many activities, except for a few that were working on interparty dialogue, and the media activities. It was determined that those particular activities, in light of the articles and the allegations, were too sensitive to continue at this time. This included almost all activities under the media program. Again, NDI was notified of this decision. It was decided to review this decision in a few weeks to determine if the activities could resume. At subsequent reviews, the situation was deemed unchanged, and remained so through to the end date of this award.

Objective 2 Support to Community Radio

Pact conducted a needs assessment of existing community radio stations with a strong focus on sustainability issues for the existing and new community radio stations. A scope of work was developed and Pact subcontracted Search for Common Ground (SFGC) to conduct the needs assessment. SFGC sent two African consultants to conduct the Needs Assessment Studies. The assessment covered two existing Community Radio Stations at Jimma and Bonga Zones, and the assessment reviewed potential sites for community radio stations in South Omo Zone again focusing on sustainability issues. Additionally, a rapid assessment was conducted by the Pact Media Program Manager at one of the prioritized sites for setting up a Community Radio Station in Gambella.

The report was sent to Jimma and Bonga Community Radio Stations and the findings were discussed with the board and staff of these stations. Based on the findings of the needs assessment Pact offered to provide support to develop the capacity as well as ensure the sustainability of the established stations. The media program manager travelled to Jimma and Bonga, and held discussions with the board, station managers and staff of these community radio stations. The findings of the assessment were presented and discussed. The main findings of the needs assessment included:

i. General Findings

The ensuing points are some of the major general findings during the assessment.

- ✓ Invest in community ownership and be cognizant of the inclusion and participation of women and youth and ensure they are central to the process.
- ✓ Utilize exchanges to foster participation and commitment and to manage expectations and excitement.
- ✓ Link into existing resources that are available through other stakeholders
- ✓ Support the development of media forums or broader networks focused on interest of community broadcasters
- ✓ Support training to ensure radio is used as a tool for peace building.
- ✓ Facilitate visits to existing stations as a platform for learning and sharing

The following major themes in the area of ownership, governance, sustainability, empowerment and technical support were also observed during the assessment.

A. Strengthening Community Ownership: Support meetings to stimulate understanding and enhance participation and ownership whilst mobilizing community support and share project documents with board members

B. Strengthening Governance:

- ✓ Training was recommended for the board and for the management to understand their complementary and supporting roles.
- ✓ Clear selection criteria should be established before setting a board to ensure boards are inclusive of all interest groups
- ✓ Conduct a comprehensive board training for appointed board members as soon as they are elected

C. Sustainability

- ✓ A comprehensive and realistic business plan should be developed by the board and station management before broadcast commences. This requires training.
- ✓ In recruiting station staff and board, the first choice should be looking out for local and indigenous capacity including persons such as teachers
- ✓ Establishing linkages with neighboring Woredas and ensuring their issues are captured in the daily broadcasts is critical for increased participation and support.
- ✓ Consider provision of motorcycles for Jimma and Bonga radio stations to support transport and programming needs.
- ✓ Consider supporting intensive trainings for station staff in innovative programme formats such as radio dramas, jingles, spot messages and research based programming as diverse formats are essential to capture listenership.

D. Audience empowerment: Provide radio sets in a few locations for general listening especially for those who cannot afford to own one.

E. Ensuring Good Process:

- ✓ Ensure that all legal requirements are fulfilled and trainings completed before injecting equipment
- ✓ Clarify the non-sensitive topics of governance and development to ensure the participation of government officials

F. Adequate Technical Support for Equipment:

- ✓ Make available basic spare equipment
- ✓ Provide training for radio technicians in both Jimma and Bonga, linked to a national institute combined with hands on practical training in a radio station
- ✓ Support provision in Jimma of more recorders, microphones, headphones and computers for editing and additional training for the Station Technician

ii. Area Specific Findings

The following are some of the major issues identified in three of the intervention areas:

In Jimma

- ✓ Work on community ownership with stakeholders leading to a Memorandum of Understanding between the university, the board and the community leaders documenting their agreement and understanding of the process.
- ✓ Support program development especially supporting the Jimma producers to develop creative programs like drama, spot messages, magazine and research based programs that focus on basic social amenities, including education and sensitization of the community and the board about the concept of a community radio is and clarity around roles and responsibilities.
- ✓ Assist to improve quality and coverage, relocating their tower and providing them with a better broadcast antenna and transmission cable, and protect computers

In Bonga

- ✓ Facilitate opening of consultative process to include women and youth and other community members for wider ownership and ultimately participation of the radio's management and programming.
- ✓ Focus on youth and women representation and programming issues in Bonga. It was recommended that a network of women and youth broadcasters be established and supported who will be trained to further the youth and women agenda.

In Jinka

- ✓ Support the establishment of a small commercial and administration office in the center of town to increase access, foster ownership and maximize business.
- ✓ Ensure community meetings are properly planned, collaboration sought with key stakeholders and information disseminated widely for increased participation.
- ✓ Consider forming a new organization through community meetings and engagements under which registration and licenses will be sought for this radio.
- ✓ The station should be located in Jinka city to foster sustainability
- ✓ Support the station in establishing linkages in neighboring woredas by recruiting community stringers; to start to air local, national and international news; to subscribe to key newspapers for regular delivery and explore internet options and start innovative programs; to recruit agents in key woredas and kebeles responsible to do business on behalf of the station; sell request forms, collect public service announcements, etc
- ✓ Foster relationships with the Justice and Security bureau of the Zone and conduct training on conflict for radio station staff, volunteers and stringers

The media program manager visited the community radio stations after the needs assessment and the stations requested support from Pact to help address the gaps identified by the assessment. The stations specifically requested Pact to conduct capacity development training on project proposal writing for the station board members and staff. This capacity building training they believed would help them to prepare solid proposals that would ensure the sustainability of their radio stations. Thus, on the basis of their needs, an experienced consultant name Ato Yoseph Benti was hired to conduct the proposal development/writing training. On July 28-31 a four-day

training session was conducted for 31 Board members and staff from all six community radio stations across the country.

During the training major topics were covered such as: concept of project cycle management; the six key Stages of project cycle; and principles and strategies of fundraising and proposal writing. Following this practicable training, in August 2009, Pact received proposals from all six of the Community Radio Stations. A pre-award assessment was conducted by both the program and grant's unit. Pact was in the process of reviewing and awarding these proposals in August when the media activities were put on hold due to the sensitivities of the media sector as outlined above.

As part of the community radios activities, Pact initially received an unsolicited proposal from the Peace and Family Media Association (PFMA) to conduct an awareness raising workshop on community radio. This workshop was aimed at promoting community radio development in the country and expanding the availability of development information to the poor and disadvantaged sections of society. After reviewing this proposal Pact signed a sub grant agreement with PFMA to conduct these workshops. PFMA began the pre-workshop assessment and preparatory work and went to the sites to conduct the workshops. However, the Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority (EBA) communicated to Pact that PFMA could not work on this issue as they were not qualified. Since EBA is the licensing authority for community radio stations, Pact determined that we needed to cancel this activity with PFMA.

Pact tried to contact other potential Ethiopian organizations that were capable of conducting the community Radio awareness raising workshop. At this time there were no Ethiopian organizations that had the capacity to conduct the workshop especially on such short notice. Therefore, Pact selected Internews/Ethiopia to conduct these workshops as they were the only organization that had sufficient capabilities to conduct this workshop in such short notice. The plan was to organize the dialogue workshops on community radio in both Jinka and Gambella. Internews submitted a proposal, and the budget was reviewed by Pact. The grant agreement was in the process of being signed but it was put on hold due to the request by USAID to suspend media activities.

Pact was also working with the Community Radio Association (CMA) to develop community radio activities. Pact signed a grant agreement with CMA and they were in the process of organizing and conducting a dialogue workshop in Addis Ababa on community radio. The workshop was scheduled to be conducted from September 15-16, 2009. The workshop sought to: raise awareness about community radio development at the national level; conduct discussions with all the stakeholders on community radio and their role in development; the experience of the already-licensed community radio stations; and legal requirement to establish the stations. CMA completed all the necessary preparatory work which included sending letters to the participants and they had identified consultants who would present papers during the workshop. This event was postponed due to USAID's request to put on hold all media related activities. A letter was sent to CMA requesting closeout reports. Accordingly, they have submitted the final financial and narrative reports and are completing the close out process.

Pact issued a call for proposals for media CSOs and professional journalists' associations to compete for capacity and media development sub-grants for community radio. Three organizations were selected to receive support: PRO PRIDE; Community Media Association (CMA); and the Ethiopian Journalist Association (EJA). Pro Pride began implementing their activity in August and the latter two agreements were signed in late August. However, the agreements with CMA and EJA were put on hold and not implemented due to the reasons as outlined above. Under this grant CMA would have developed and conducted training and capacity-building activities in journalism, radio programming & broadcasting, technical operations and station management; and established and launched operations of the Addis Ababa *Single Multi-Community Media Facility*. The grant to EJA would have provided capacity building to the association and provided assistance for trainings and workshops for all of the media.

It was determined that the Pro Pride grant could continue due to the fact that it had already started and that it was not determined to be sensitive. The project was working through a media NGO and not a media outlet. Pro Pride's project had the following objectives: 1) Enhance knowledge and understanding of radio program staff in the area of gender, children and HIV/AIDS programming; 2) Enhance technical capacities of radio program staff in the area of digital recording, digital editing and mixing; 3) Improve the status of the studios of Pro Pride's radio programs operating in Amhara and Dire Dawa Regions; and 4) Share experiences and achievements of Pro Prides's Radio Programs to other similar institutions. Most of the activities were completed.

1) Training: - Pro Pride planned and organized three trainings on HIV/AIDS programming, Gender and OVC programming and Technical training that focused on digital recording, editing and mixing. Each of these trainings were five days for a total of 15 days in which 17 staff (10 reporters and 7 from other sectors) participated from Addis Ababa, Dire Dawa and Bahir Dar.

2) Radio studio renovation: - Pro Pride improved their existing low quality radio studios. Pro Pride renovated two of its studios in two regions of the country (Amhara and Dire Dawa). These studios became operational and improved the quality of their programming significantly.

3) Equipment: - Pro Pride procured necessary equipment which included: two mixers; two Studio microphones; two computers; two printers; two external hard disk; two studio tables; and sound proofing material. This procurement improved the quality of their programming.

The final activity was to share the experiences of Pro Pride's activities. This plan included: publishing a magazine; and conducting a workshop to share experiences and best practices. However, due to the media activities being put on hold, Pact determined that it would close out the media project and not request a no cost extension. Therefore, Pro Pride ran out of time and was not able to conduct this last activity as Pact began closeout of the media project.

III. Comparison of Planned Vs Achieved Activities

Despite the many challenges faced by the project, some activities were conducted and the project accomplished the following major activities. The following table outlines the summary of planned versus achieved activities.

| | List of Activities | Unit | Plan | Achieved | Remark |
|------------|--|--------------|------|----------|--|
| I | Formal Establishment of Media Forum | | | | |
| | Establish Media Forum | Forum | 1 | - | Not achieved due to the inability of the Forum to register as legal entity |
| | Organizational support for the Media forum | provision | 1 | - | “ |
| | Strategic Planning for media forum | Docume nt | 1 | - | “ |
| | Media forum meetings conducted | meeting | 5 | 8 | |
| | | | | | |
| | Press Council and Code of ethics to promote self-regulation | | | | |
| | Development of media code of ethics and constitution | policy | 2 | 2 | draft document was prepared |
| | Meeting organized to deliberate on the draft code of conduct and constitution | | | | |
| II. | Community Radio | | | | |
| | Community Needs Assessment | Assess't | 1 | 1 | Completed by Search for Common Ground |
| | Dialogue workshop on community radios | | 2 | - | PFMA began this work but was canceled. Agreement was in process with Internews and an agreement was signed with CMA but put on hold. |
| | Capacity Building training for existing community radio stations board and staff member | person | 30 | 31 | Six community radio stations involved |
| | Sub-awarding grants for media CSOs to develop radio programming that contribute to social & economic development | CSO | | 2 | CMA and pro pride were awarded grants. Other grant agreements were put on hold. |
| | Training on Essential Radio journalism for existing CRS | CRS | 6 | | Not accomplished due to activities put on hold. |

| | | | | | |
|--|---|-----|---|---|--|
| | Training on local content development, social/development programming and audience research | CRS | 6 | | “ |
| | Rapid Appraisal visits on CRSs were conducted (those not covered by the SFCG assessment) | CRS | 4 | 6 | All community radio stations were assessed during the pre-award assessment |
| | | | | | |

IV. Successes, Challenges, Lesson Learned and the Way Forward

The following were the successes achieved by this project.

- ✓ The project revitalized the Media Forum’s activities which was started earlier under Pact’s Constructive Dialogue Initiative program. The development and drafting of the Code of Ethics and Constitution of the Media Council was an important achievement.
- ✓ Enhancing the capacity of community radio stations to design sound project proposals was the other major success of the project. This was demonstrated when all the community radio stations submitted proposals which were good quality and were in the process of being signed with Pact. These proposals focused on mobilizing resources and sustainability.

The project encountered some major challenges during the implementation of the activities:

- ✓ The project was only one year and this was a very short time line for a project of this magnitude especially given the quality of media in Ethiopia and the political sensitivities of working in this environment. While the project agreement began in early February, the work plan was only approved in early May. Therefore, Pact only had approximately seven months to implement these activities. This issue coupled with the low capacity of the media civil society organizations, professional journalists’ associations and community radio stations to design and manage projects greatly affected the implementation the project and made it very difficult. A project like this media project should be at least two years if not three years. Conducting this project in a one year period was not realistic.
- ✓ The delay or inability of the Media Forum registration prevented Pact from conducting several planned activities scheduled in the project period. Pact did continue working with the Steering Committee of the Media Forum and continued to support the work of the Media Forum technically on self regulation activities until the media activities were put on hold.
- ✓ In early September all media related work was put on hold due to the newspaper articles accusing USAID of meddling in the media and trying to attempt an Orange Revolution. USAID requested that Pact put on hold all media related activities until further notice. It was determined that the political situation was too tense in the lead up to the elections and therefore, it would be impossible to work in the area of media.

The most prominent lessons learned during the short period of the project implementation were and the way forward are:

- ✓ The media environment in Ethiopia is extremely sensitive especially in the run up to the elections. At this time it is extremely difficult to work in this environment and an organization cannot work in this area without having a strong working relationship with the government. An organization needs to be open and transparent with the government and they need to be a partner.
- ✓ The media sector is extremely weak and needs a lot of work to bring it up to international standards. Therefore, any media programming needs to be long term at least three years. There needs to be a strong focus on process and partnership.