



USAID | WEST AFRICA

FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

RELEASE IN FULL

REVIEW
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Reviewer

SUCCESS STORY

USAID supports radio theater to tackle sensitive issues in community conflict and Countering Violent Extremism (CVE)



Above: Winners proudly show off the trophies bestowed upon them for CVE radio drama.

Below: Actors from the Bol theater troupe present their winning sketch on Boko Haram recruitment to a packed auditorium in N'Djamena.



"[When I saw the man dressed as a Boko Haram captain], I was trembling, before I remembered that it was all just theater! It made me reflect on the current situation, and on all of the victims and the damage that has resulted from terrorism."

female audience member
N'Djamena, Chad

CVE radio programs produced by the Chad media team in the Peace Through Development II Project (USAID/PDev II) have long employed sketches and mini-dramas, and recently, full-length soap operas, as a way to broach sensitive topics and make them more accessible to audiences. While fictional, the dramas are designed to mirror society, and their engaging, relatable storylines reflect the hopes and struggles of Chadians, as well as while modeling strategies to help listeners resolve conflicts and overcome obstacles in their own lives.

A radio theater contest held in September 2015 saw USAID/PDev II's CVE dramas enriched by diverse geographies and voices, as more than 14 troupes from project core zones in Chad submitted CVE dramas to compete for top honors and cash awards. The awards ceremony drew more than 200 attendees and featured live performances of the winning sketches: In first place, a Bol troupe for their sketch on the recruitment of youth by Boko Haram; in second place, the ATAG group from Ndjamen for a drama on violence within schools; and in third place, an Oum Hadjer acting troupe with their sketch on herder/farmer conflicts. Sketches were broadcast via USAID/PDev II's network of partner radio stations to listeners across the country, serving to raise the profile of the victorious theater groups and raise awareness of local CVE issues among local audiences.

For the Bol troupe, the ceremony was a momentous occasion that marked not only their first foray into professional competition, but also their first time appearing in the capital city of N'Djamena. Their performance began with a bang when the lead actor emerged "with the costumes and gestures" of Shekou, the leader of Boko Haram, causing quite the stir among the audience. As one spectator exclaimed: "I jumped in my seat and shivers went down my arms when I saw him. I think the whole audience was terrified, and it made me think about how much terror one person or group can cause." The troupe received a standing ovation at the conclusion of their powerful sketch, with the Secretary General of the Ministry of Culture remarking that they proved that "competence and talent can also be found in the provinces." The team stated that they will use their winnings to achieve a goal they had previously struggled to achieve due to insufficient funds: the purchase of video and sound recording equipment needed to produce audiovisual dramas and further raise awareness in their community.

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U.S. Agency for International Development
Washington, DC 20523-1000
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