

Grants Officer Representative Report

GRANT SLMAQM-13-CA-1223

Grantee: Equal Access International
 RELEASE IN PART B7(F),B6

Grantee
 Point of
 Contact:

B6
 B7(F)

Project Title:	Hausa Language Media Platform	REVIEW AUTHORITY: Clarke Ellis, Senior Reviewer
Location:	Northern Nigeria and surrounding Hausa-speaking countries	
DOS Funding:	\$5,850,000 ESF (CT/CVE) \$1,303,696 ESF (AF/Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership)	
Amount Disbursed:	\$5,503,993.04 (as of 30 June 2015) by grantee plus \$70,828.67 in AQM fees	
Award Period:	06/30/2014 to 05/31/2016	
Project Objective:	This project supports the development of Arewa24, a free-to-air Hausa-language media platform offering youthful (12-29) audiences a robust slate of high-quality programs, with a consistent underlying message that violent extremism is counterproductive and that non-violent means to redress grievances are possible. Arewa24 will explore and promote the oral traditions of the peoples of northern Nigeria and, by developing locally resonant stories and themes, provide an alternative to the frequently religion-based, Arab-centric media content provided by other satellite broadcasters targeting the region. Recognizing that the process of radicalization to violence often begins around age 11 or 12 and that women, especially mothers, can have a major positive or negative influence, programming directed toward younger women, families and children – a gap in the current Hausa-language media landscape – will feature prominently. Recognizing the pervasiveness of mobile telephone use in Nigeria, links to programming snippets through social media and SMS will be available. Funds will be used for the costs related to creation or acquisition and the delivery of TV content designed to counter violent extremism and otherwise promote economic and political stability, such as TV shows encouraging target audiences to reject political violence and extremism and support inter-ethnic and interfaith tolerance, diversity of opinion and minority rights, and respect for rule of law.	
Partners:	Equal Access International	
Project Indicators met:	(as of 30 June 2015) Content: 588 hours locally produced since inception, across 14 regular and special-purpose shows. Scope: Expansion of programming scope to include areas outside of Kano. Social Media: Arewa24.com has received 176,000 visitors, with a total of 386,000 page visits; more than 50% of visitors have accessed the site from a mobile device. Social Media: Over 51,000 Facebook likes (88% male, 84% Nigerian); Facebook page now reaches 2,800 people per day, up from 23 per day in late 2014. Social Media: Nearly 6,000,000 minutes of content viewed on Arewa24's YouTube channel; over half of all recent views have been of the CVE flagship series <i>Dadin Kowa</i>. Sustainability: Booked commercial revenue stands at \$176,000; this does not include donations (cash, professional services, lease rebates) exceeding \$150,000. Sustainability: Baseline survey completed in January, with results showing a much larger audience in the six focus states than had been anticipated. Coordination: Arrangements in train or under discussion with MIST, World Learning, Souktel and Sesame Workshop; also, Arewa24 will soon air a subtitled version of CSO-sponsored <i>Dawn in the Creeks</i>. Capacity Building: Staff have attended a number of international events and trainings, enhancing their personal skills and building professional networks. Outreach: Staff member participated in CVE Summit in Washington.	

GOR observation	Especially in light of the challenging security and political environment in Nigeria and the paucity of quality production capacity in northern Nigeria, Equal Access International's (EAI) accomplishments to date have been impressive, as has been the dedication of the almost entirely Nigerian staff, many of whom have worked very long hours to be a part of this effort. With minor and little-noticed lapses, Arewa24 successfully steered clear of entanglements in the 2014-2015 electoral cycle; staff members who provided unauthorized airtime to a particular candidate for Governor of a State were disciplined by suspensions without pay by Arewa24 without PM intervention. The CVE serial <i>Dadin Kowa</i> has become a major hit, including with audiences outside the satellite footprint (31% of all YouTube views originate in Saudi Arabia and 10% in the United States; Nigeria is third at 9% - and <i>Dadin Kowa</i> now accounts for 53% of YouTube minutes watched). Initial indications are that Ramadan programming was well-received, including <i>Lessons from the Life of the Prophet</i>, a 20-part series funded entirely by an anonymous Nigerian donor. Commercial revenue significantly exceeded the target for the first year of operations, as the target was zero; however, the pace of commercial (primarily advertising) revenue will need to pick up if Arewa24 is to meet its 31 May 2016 target of \$1,200,000. There is hope this might happen, as many advertising agencies did not have Arewa24 in their 2015 budgets but presumably are considering it for 2016 airtime buys. The electoral victory of President Muhammadu Buhari should increase advertiser interest in courting Northern audiences (most of whom understand Hausa). Engagement with respect to Arewa24 by the Embassy Abuja POC has been energetic and important, identifying several possible programmatic synergies (other USG-sponsored activities which Arewa24 might support on a commercial basis while benefiting from Arewa24's access to Hausa-speaking viewers). While Arewa24 should continue to avoid news programming at least for another three months, intensified outreach to newly-elected governors and other officials to offer a platform to discuss their policy approaches is becoming more important; it may become necessary for PM or a USG official to intervene to push that process along. The shift from Nilesat 102 to Eutelsat 16A prompted complaints from outside Nigeria (primarily Saudi Arabia and Sudan, to a lesser extent Libya); however, easier access within Nigeria and extension of access to Abuja and the South will ultimately benefit the project as a Nigerian enterprise. Works needs to accelerate on privatization, now that all necessary legal structures are in place. It will be critical to identify representative Nigerians committed to sustaining the channel's mission and ethos as initial subscribers to a private placement; one thoughtful, well-placed individual suggested a small group of wealthy individuals, one of whom indicated to PM separately that he was interested in the channel's future. This would be an ideal solution but will require engagement by PM and perhaps by USG officials.
Drafter and date	Date 4/25/15
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