

ALT Village Voices for Development (VVD)

The Project

Working in partnership with its sister NGO, Andry Lalana Tohana, ALT is delighted to announce the launch of a new radio project in southern Madagascar: Village Voices for Development



Gathering opinion in focus groups

Launched in February 2012, initially as a six-month feasibility study, the project will use radio and mobile telephony to enable dialogue between non-literate villagers and decision makers about local development issues and strategies. In doing so, the project aims to address communication gaps, give voice to local people and improve local governance.

The Challenge

In the south more than two thirds of the rural population are local producers living in poverty and facing annual food shortages due to extreme climate conditions (e.g. regular drought). They are isolated and marginalised due to vast geographic distances, poor infrastructure, and low literacy rates.

In these circumstances how do the rural poor interact with the decision makers whose policies determine their future?

A national communications for empowerment study by UNDP¹ in 2008 demonstrated there were few mechanisms in place that afforded local people an opportunity to interact with policy/decision makers and almost none were available through the media.

Why radio?

In Madagascar radio is still the most popular and the most readily available media. More than 70% of the population cites radio as their main source of information and 91% interviewed in the UNDP survey said they felt that media had the potential to change their lives.

ALT has been working with rural radio for more than ten years as a means to provide access to information and non-formal education for village communities. Between 1999-2009 it set up more than 3000 listening groups across the south of the island and broadcast more than 3400 educational programmes to over 800,000 listeners, with demonstrable impacts on the achievement of Millennium Development Goals².

¹ UNDP Communications for Empowerment in Madagascar in 2008

² The Contribution of Radio to the Achievement of Millennium Development Goals in Southern Madagascar, Metcalf, Harford, Myers 2007

As part of its strategy to empower local people to help themselves, ALT has been working to increase the voice of local people in its radio programming and via other media, in particular with the introduction of its Oral Testimony project (ALT / PANOS London 2007-2009).

VVD represents the next step in developing mechanisms for facilitating the voice of local people and will use radio and mobile telephony to offer groundbreaking opportunities for local citizens to engage in public debate and decision making processes.

How will it work?

Village Voices for Development (VVD) will build on ALT's ten years of experience with **Project Radio** and will work with existing listening groups in the Androy region. It will create opportunities for villagers to discuss and record their most challenging development issues, and to pose questions and express their concerns about these to local decision makers who in turn will listen to the recorded points and respond.



The Q and A will be broadcast as one dialogue – creating a new dynamic of direct exchange, dissolving cultural barriers to communication and promoting greater openness, transparency and inclusion.

Phone in debates will also be a feature of this project – a new experience for the community and the radio stations - and in this way the stakeholders will be invited to explore different ways to open up dialogue and share their points of view.

The project will ensure that women and young people, traditionally excluded from decision making processes in the village, will be given equal opportunities to participate in the project with appropriate time and space for their specific needs.

Our Partnership pledge

ALT Mg will manage and develop the project in the field and work in participation with local communities, local Authorities, NGOs and OCBs.

In line with our collaborative agreement with ALT MG, ALT UK has been helping to fundraise for this project, develop proposals and advise on the project design. ALT will continue to provide technical advice, mentoring and support to the team in Madagascar during this study, with further inputs from Nicola Harford /Media Support Partnership (MSP) and Antonie Kraemer, a PhD Anthropologist from SOAS.

The Feasibility study is being funded by the **Adsum Foundation** and the **Swiss Embassy Mg**. Additionally, **Vodafone's World of Difference** is sponsoring time of ALT volunteer, Yvonne Orengo, between March and April 2012 to support the development of ALT Madagascar and fundraise on its behalf.

Hope for the future

This project is being launched thirteen years to the month after ALT launched its 'Project Radio' in 1999, following a similar feasibility study. Project Radio went on to develop over ten years with three phases of EC funding and deliver significant results.

The hope is that the monthly broadcasts and the evaluation of the feasibility study will deliver sufficiently positive results to encourage further funding for scaling up of this initiative into the Androy, and other regions of Madagascar.

The local authorities and many NGOs in Androy are already welcoming this project, recognising that *'what we need is communications.'*

Be involved....

Friends of the Trust wishing to help or support this project can contact Yvonne at yorengo@andrewleestrust.org or on 01225 873 880.

You can also donate via our web [link to CAF](#).

You can follow news on <http://worldofdifference.vodafone.co.uk/blogs/yvonne-orengo/>