



SUCCESS STORY

Radios Connect Government with People

Radios deliver educational programs to rural areas



Women in Sudan's Blue Nile state learn how to use hand-crank radios distributed by USAID.

Educational radio programs are helping a population that is emerging from decades of civil war get engaged in civil society and learn about their new government.

There are few radios throughout rural Southern Sudan, either in the markets or in the hands of the people. Consequently, the new southern government formed after a peace agreement ending decades of civil war faces a major challenge — it has no capacity to communicate with its people. The people of Southern Sudan live across a territory about the size of Texas with little or no infrastructure. The lack of information about the country's nascent peace has fueled doubts about whether it will last.

As part of a campaign to increase awareness of the North-South peace agreement reached in January 2005, USAID is distributing radios throughout Southern Sudan that will enable people to listen to broadcasts on the constitution, citizens' rights, government accountability, and political developments. The 50,000 radios powered by solar energy or hand cranks are being distributed mainly to isolated and war-affected areas, specifically targeting lower-income and marginalized people within those communities — women, youth, displaced people, and ex-combatants.

To complement this educational radio programming, USAID is helping to organize listening groups to give citizens an opportunity to discuss issues related to civil society and citizen involvement. Regional resource centers are being set up in six areas — Bahr al Ghazal, Equatoria, Upper Nile, Abyei, Southern Kordofan, and Southern Blue Nile — to host the groups and provide meeting spaces and resources for civil society organizations. USAID is also developing radio-based educational resources, such as classes and teacher trainings, that the listening groups can access.