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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**SIERRA LEONE**

## SUCCESS STORY

# Broadcasting a Voice of Peace

**A radio station brings information and a voice to remote communities**



Photo: USAID/Laura Lartigue

A deejay announces the news for Radio Moa, a community radio station in a remote area of Sierra Leone.

***“People come to meetings and they come on time because they’ve heard the notice on the radio,” says Samson, a Radio Moa news reader. “This is helping us to be better organized.”***

On December 13, 2003, gunfire near the Kailahun District army barracks created panic among town residents, who were still recovering from the trauma of Sierra Leone’s 11-year civil war. People rushed to gather belongings and flee into the bush.

Within hours, Radio Moa had launched a live investigation, and promptly broadcast a real time news message that this was an isolated incident — a drunken brawl, in fact — and that it was safe to stay in the area, preventing mass flight.

USAID sponsored the construction of Radio Moa in the remote Kailahun District to give locals who had never had a radio station access to good, hard-hitting information on important local and national issues, like elections, HIV/AIDS, land disputes, education, health care, combatant reintegration, the U.N. tribunal and anti-corruption and anti-trafficking programs.

Since it began broadcasting in December 2003, listeners have rigged up old radios or purchased new ones to hear Radio Moa’s local-language programs, punctuated by lively African music. In addition to transmitters and other equipment, USAID provided volunteer journalists with bicycles and tape recorders to help them conduct interviews and gather information.

Close to the diamond mines and once the epicenter of the war, Kailahun has historically received no news at all. Now, Radio Moa broadcasts over 60-70 kilometers, reaching into both Guinea and Liberia. Within Sierra Leone, news now travels much faster. Says Blama Sandama Kallon, a staff volunteer, “Rather than writing papers for someone to deliver by hand, we can get messages by radio as far as Kenema and Bo” — two large towns in south-eastern Sierra Leone.

Nyuma Amara Samson, a news reader for Radio Moa, says there’s another bonus to the station’s public announcements: “People come to meetings and they come on time because they’ve heard the notice on the radio. This is helping us to be better organized.”

By giving timely information to traditionally marginalized rural people, Radio Moa is also giving them the power to protect and support their home communities.