Radio against Ebola

The Ebola epidemic that is currently ravaging West Africa has already claimed over 4000 lives. The virus is continuing to spread and no effective vaccine has yet been announced. The attachment of people in rural areas to various ritual practices has been identified as a proven factor in spreading the disease.

In order to support NGOs and governments in their disease prevention efforts, CFI – the French media cooperation agency – is starting an urgent project to enhance the ability of local radio stations to provide effective information about Ebola, working in cooperation with medical, traditional and religious authorities.

“Radio against Ebola” is a €150,000 project involving 6 countries close to the region of the epidemic: Senegal, Mali, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Togo and Benin

The “Radio against Ebola” project will take place over a three-month period in six countries identified as potentially exposed: Senegal, Mali, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Togo and Benin. It has been designed to be integrated into each country’s national plans to prevent and combat the disease and will rely on the close on-the-ground involvement of national local radio federations.

“Radio against Ebola” includes a full accelerated training programme for radio journalists on how to produce a health-based magazine show focusing on Ebola

From 20 October to 1 November 2014, CFI is organising 6 simultaneous actions which will affect a total of 48 local radio stations in strategic geographical regions. The aim is to help the stations to broadcast health information magazines in which medical personnel and traditional practitioners can tackle the sensitive issues that arise where social and ritual practices pose a risk of spreading the disease.

The main goal will be to improve acceptance of information and messages among people who often distrust what they are told about disease prevention and contribute to a change in their behaviour.

During phase 2 in November, a joint train-the-trainer session in Abidjan will prepare 12 journalist-trainers (two per country) to pass on these skills to other radio stations in their home country, via the national radio federations which are acting as project partners.
During phase 3, the federations will organise training sessions to propagate the pilot module, with support from their technical partners and local finance sources.

“By adopting a cultural, anthropological approach, CFI is offering an innovative response to the issue of Ebola prevention. ‘Radio against Ebola’ has been designed and launched in just 6 weeks, illustrating our ability to react to the expectations of local media providers and to those of people in West African regions facing a high risk of contamination with the virus,” summarises Etienne Fiatte, CFI Managing Director.

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