

Thematic: Lack of a free and independent media capable of holding politicians to account has been closely associated with poor systems of government responsiveness, particularly in FCAS where we have more than twenty years of experience. BBC Media Action has long-term presence in many diverse conflict and fragile environments; for example, deteriorating governance –Kenya; protracted conflict - South Sudan; and post-conflict – Nepal, and vast experience in strengthening inclusive politics and supporting political processes as well as improving accountability through media and communication. Rooted in the values, expertise and trusted reputation of the BBC, our work is guided by our organisational approach to [Governance and Rights](#), in-house thematic expertise, applied and human-centred research, monitoring and evaluation and context driven and adaptive programming. This all positions us to deliver requirements at pace and in changing environments. BBC Media Action’s work is actively building on the existing evidence base that free and independent media and communication can drive up democratic norms, providing a critical check on corruption,¹ and fostering a culture of accountability that pushes government and other power holders to answer to citizens. We do this by **empowering people at scale** with trusted, accurate and balanced information to understand what drives conflict, increase tolerance, reduce acceptance of violence and support the formation of inclusive identities. We also **create space** and facilitate discussion by enabling people to interact directly with decisions-makers, and engage in meaningful exchange across societal divides. By affecting these levers, BBC Media Action’s work is strengthening ordinary citizens’ capacity to **influence powerful actors**, the decision-makers that drive peace and conflict.

Our £90m, multi- country Global Grant (DFID-funded) supported more than **30 accountability and inclusive politics focused mass media and communication initiatives** between 2011 and 2017. Using an electoral cycle approach, we designed and implemented context-specific programming including a variety of TV and radio formats and intensive partner capacity strengthening outputs. Geared towards increasing participation and facilitating public discussion at different stages of the electoral cycle we reached 192 million people in 12 countries² at a cost of 29 pence per person. Extensive **quantitative impact research** across seven fragile states showed that people exposed to BBC Media Action supported programmes participated more in politics than people who were not, even when taking other influencing factors such as age, income and an existing interest in politics into account. They did this by improving people’s **knowledge and understanding** of governance-related issues including democratic processes, voting rights and the responsibilities of government, and by stimulating **discussion**. Surveys showed regular audiences discussed and felt better equipped to discuss such issues with people outside their immediate family and friends compared to non-viewers/listeners. 89% of people exposed to programmes agreed or strongly agreed that that they helped to hold government to account. The Global Grant scored A+ overall.

In Kenya, regular audiences of national debate programme *Sema Kenya* (Kenya Speaks) were twice as likely to participate in politics than non-listeners/viewers. Research for our long-running governance radio drama in Nigeria, *Story Story* reaching 23 million people, found that 32% of listeners reported doing something differently as a result of listening to the drama. Of those, 40% said they voted for the candidate of their choice instead of who they may have been pressured to vote for and 26% reported they registered to vote. A study on the [role of media on attitudes and discussion on tolerance and rejection of violence](#) tested the hypothesis in Kenya and Nigeria that balanced and inclusive media-induced discussion can be a positive force in mitigating attitudes associated with conflict. Future BBC Media Action CSSF programming and research will build on this analysis of the underlying social, behavioural and normative drivers of accountability, inclusive politics and stability. It will also seek to understand the conditions under which media can support positive dimensions of discussion in order to guide our media support and conflict related projects and those in the wider sector.

¹ DFID (2015) Why corruption matters: understanding causes, effects and how to address them, Evidence paper on Corruption [online] Available from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/406346/corruption-evidence-paper-why-corruption-matters.pdf

² Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Kenya, Myanmar, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palestinian Territories, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Tanzania and Zambia

Our work bridges accountability with peace-building and state-building, directly speaking to the emphasis placed by DFID's peace-building and state-building framework on "meaningful two-way communication channels that can...drive up state-responsiveness and accountability and meet public expectations". Our projects seek to improve representation and empowerment of socially, politically and/or marginalised and excluded groups recognising deficits in FCAS to negotiate societal fractures constructively, and that media may be one of the few institutions available to reach the marginalised and vulnerable. With inclusive and gender transformative approaches integral to the design, our debate programme in Afghanistan, *Open Jirga* (Open Assembly), ensured more than 80% of the studio audience came from provinces outside Kabul, and that on average just under half (47%) were women, unprecedented in similar programming. While ensuring women were part of the production team, we also role-modelled gender equality to audiences, with men and women sitting next each other in studio audiences and both asking questions. Although unpopular among men at first, over time attitudes shifted and though female audiences at times felt discomfort questioning politicians they found courage to do so. Research found using both Dari and Pashto was key to audience engagement, and experts recognised the contribution using both languages could make to build a national identity.

Understanding that youth are often marginalised from mainstream politics in Nigeria, and can be both perpetrators and targets of factional violence, we sought to engage them on their own terms when tackling elections-related tensions. This included hard hitting TV and radio public service announcements (PSA) featuring some of Nigeria's biggest music stars. More than 18 million Nigerians saw our TV PSAs and research found that the programmes drove people to vote. In Tanzania, *Niambie* (Tell Me, SDC/DFID) project, connected young people from across the country through multi-media programming/platforms to understand, discuss and influence decisions about issues that affect their lives. Research in 2017 showed 24% of youth were listeners, with 81% saying Niambie content had improved their understanding of their rights and responsibilities, the constitutional review process, the local elections and general election. 28% of listeners said they took action as a result of the programme. 51% of the listeners were women.

Strengthening the capacity of local, independent media is a key pillar in ensuring that platforms for inclusive and accountable dialogue are locally-driven, sustainable and responsive to audience feedback. During the Global Grant we developed 135 capacity building partnerships. Our Nepal programme *Sajha Sawal* (Common Questions) supported radio partners to produce local discussion programmes with audiences reporting that programmes made them more aware of their right to question authorities. Research also found with some service delivery focused commitments, changes could be observed in follow-up research. As part of a consortium delivering the *Implementation and Analysis in Action of Accountability Programme* (IAAAP - DFID) in Somalia, alongside original programming aired on BBC Somali Service and community outreach, we have strengthened the capacity of Horn Cable TV and Radio Hargeisa to provide opportunities for people to hold district and national government to account and to engage in constructive discussion.

When designing projects we build in adaptive measures to manage changing conditions, particularly in fluid FCAS. Evidence is growing that media freedoms are increasingly under threat by political co-option from factional interests, legal restrictions, threats to journalists, and active investment in partial media. A global spike in mis/dis-information seeking to erode trust in public information and fuel instability, often for ideological, political or economic gain sets a backdrop where support to independent media in FCAS is vital, and remains integral to our work. Rapidly increase in access to social media in Sierra Leone, particularly among young people has created new space for political expression, but the potential for irresponsible use resulted in government threats to close down social media if considered a threat to national security during the 2018 elections. With largest Facebook page in Sierra Leone with 500,000 followers, we were positioned to support responsible use of social media during elections (DFID funded via UNDP). We designed in-depth training sessions on responsible use of social media for three groups: journalists, election management bodies, and young people active on social media. Secondly, we produced a range of media content (films and graphics) for wider audiences. Content covered how to identify fake news and misinformation, informed followers of the legal implications of sharing other people's posts, and shared tips about online safety. Following training, there was a 25% increase in the number of participants who agreed that 'I can identify untrue news stories'.

Thematic 7: BBC Media Action has a strong record of supporting **peaceful and constructive state-society relations**, drawing on the BBC’s editorial standards of impartiality, independence and trust, and takes an inclusive and conflict-sensitive approach. FCAS typically have a weak capacity to fulfil basic governance functions, and weak incentives to respond to citizens’ needs. Dominant media trends in many FCAS are characterised by increased co-option of independent media and fragmentation and fracturing of media and communication spaces often along factional, ethnic or religious lines. **Genuinely independent media can provide critical and constructive intermediary between state and wider civil society** and between people by enabling constructive debate across divides. In addition, **social and behaviour change communication** has an ongoing role to play in solving these challenges. BBC Media Action initiatives are rooted in high quality contextual research, adaptive management and have a strong reputation for creativity, innovation and impact.

Our **conflict prevention** work addresses social drivers of social cohesion through mass media and communication activities, both nationally and locally. Our work supports interaction across fracture points to improve inter-group tolerance, increase positive attitudes towards outsiders through observation of fellow community members and modelling of constructive interactions with “the other” e.g. extended contact, debunking myths and replacing hostility with mutual respect. *Life in Lulu* (Norwegian Ministry for Foreign Affairs), our long-running radio drama in South Sudan that reaches at least 1 million people (adults 15+), is produced in multiple languages and broadcast nationally on 20+ partner radio stations. Conflict analysis during the project has provided insight on drivers of local conflict and power dynamics, helping to develop locally relevant stories and characters geared towards prevention of future conflict. The drama uses social modelling (e.g. between IDPs settling near Lulu village and the existing community) to improve the role of women, young men, elders and communities in preventing and negotiating conflict. Listeners recognised that *Life in Lulu* can help individuals and communities have tolerance, respect and trust of “outsiders” and live together in peace. Partnering with local peace-building CSOs on outreach activities, we are using the radio drama as an entry-point to facilitate community discussion, targeting women and youth, and elders as guardians of informal structures and customary law. CSOs are also supported to work more effectively with local radio partners to better meet the information needs of local communities. This ‘bottom up’ approach is enhancing the both the core function of local media and strengthening the peace-building objectives of CSOs.

Our **conflict response, management and resolution** work includes social modelling of skills to contain and resolve conflict in non-violent ways, shift social norms around violence, and support neutral platforms for debate. Drama has a long and [well evidenced record](#) of tackling conflict and improving understanding of “the other”. Our radio drama *Story Story* (DFID), explored the effects of different approaches to disputes and models non-violent conflict resolution. Qualitative research showed listeners more open to negotiation than non-listeners, understanding dialogue as a mutual benefit. As part of innovative community focused conflict resolution efforts in Myanmar, *Tea Cup Diaries* (USAID OTI), coupled drama with listening groups through partner CSOs to address religious and ethnic fractures in society and increase understanding and tolerance. The project has featured minority characters, including Muslims that have increased understanding of ‘other’ ethnic lives (particularly Shan) and helped audiences develop conflict resolution skills. More recently audience research has highlighted the need for critical and informed use of online information that does not incite division, with new programming being adapted to address these issues through innovative use of storytelling. Our activities and channels to reach key audiences that may drive or influence conflict are context-dependent and informed by ongoing learning. In Ukraine our award-winning TV drama *5baksiv* (“5 bucks” - FCO and US State Department) was augmented with online engagement strategies to increase understanding between diverse groups of young people, vulnerable to the divisiveness of identity-based politics, reduce conflict-generating narratives and facilitate communication across fracture points in society using a blend of comedy, debate and discussion.

Our **Peace-building/state-building** work includes national public conversations, support to free and independent media, and inclusive discussion to address the disenfranchisement of groups that could risk stability. Furthermore,

when mapping potential change processes through our theories of change, capacity strengthening, particularly of local media to enhance audience-driven accurate, relevant, balanced and timely content, has often emerged as core to our approach for supporting lasting change. This work has supported critical dialogue between state, civil society and citizens, balancing constructive debate and confrontation. Myanmar Pyaw Ba (Speak!, Joint Peace Fund–DFID-funded along with other major funders) is a multi-media initiative that seeks to engage all elements of Myanmar’s society through national TV programming, social media, and national and regional media capacity building to provide space for civil society, women, youth, and others to discuss issues related to peace and conflict, including the formal peace process, with greater balance and depth. A Gender transformative approach and regular conflict analysis/review have been integrated in the project design from inception. BBC Media Action’s *Sajha Sawal* (Common Questions) has been **the most popular TV governance program in Nepal**, since 2007. In 2017, *Sajha Sawal* and corresponding activities focused on supporting discussion around **the new constitution and the introduction of federalism** (SDC funded). A number of episodes on decentralization and local governance concentrated on issues of service delivery, inclusive development and good governance. Concerns raised by live audience members included school education, infrastructure, health services and social security. An episode in remote Eastern Nepal raising concerns about the delay in construction of a key bridge that links local districts was addressed by the government. Nepal provides another example of our support to inclusive and conflict sensitive media. We are currently working in partnership with International Alert (CSSF funded) to strengthen local capacity and collaboration for peace, working with media organisations at sub-national and local levels to produce conflict sensitive content on the local and political context.

While much of our capacity strengthening work is delivered through established country offices, we are also able to deliver effective outcomes through remote management. Shaping the Future of Syria’s Media (EC ENPI) supported Syria News to develop a sustainable online training platform to build skills of 194 Syrian journalists, bloggers, and online activists to produce objective credible reports based on well-sourced facts and diverse viewpoints. In Iraq, we are currently partnering with Radio Al Mirbad and Radio Nawa to produce programmes that provide accurate and useful information in the face of rumours and sectarian narratives (CSSF and EU). BBC Media Action set up and has supported Radio Al Mirbad, Southern Iraq’s public service broadcaster, since 2005. It is now locally-owned with an estimated weekly reach of 2 million and an influential force in Iraq’s new civil society playing an important role in improving accountability of local government and giving its community a voice. Our CSSF-funded training initiative, *El Kul* (News for All) is enabling young Libyans to gain media skills that provide balanced, fair reporting on events in Libya. Its multi-platform output provides an impartial and trustworthy voice for all Libyans. This project specifically aims to encourage growth of civil society and free media as a way to hold government to account. Through content on the [El Kul Facebook page](#), this training programme provides independent news and information for Libyans. ***El Kul* reaches on average more than 1 million users per day** and has been one of Libya’s top five most active, providing a space for voices from all sections of society. Influence analysis conducted on the Facebook page found that approximately 70 other pages were following *El Kul*, representing **a total of more than 3.7 million fans**. Research has shown that users feel ***El Kul* is “impartial”, “unique” and “trustworthy”**, vital in a highly polarised media environment.

We also work directly with government. Our project in Iraq to support the development of improved media legislation to protect freedom of information and expression and media plurality led to approval in May 2015 of a ground-breaking law to re-establish the Iraqi Media Network as a public service broadcaster (US State Dept/FCO/EU). Our strategies, rooted in a nuanced understanding of context and stakeholder agendas from long-term engagement in the country, included onsite consultancy with Iraqi parliamentarians and on-the-job support for the media regulator. Med Media(EU), a multi-country³ consortium initiative aimed to facilitate the progress of legal and institutional media reforms across the Mediterranean region by offering policy-makers, regulators, senior broadcasters and union leaders access to technical expertise, networking activities, innovative peer-to-peer programmes, and resources on a bespoke MedMedia Portal.

³ Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Israel and Palestine