

DEVELOPMENT MEDIA INTERNATIONAL
QUARTERLY REPORT (JANUARY TO MARCH 2015)
MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH PROJECT, DRC

DMI

OVERVIEW

The first 3 months of the project have been very busy with the focus on setting up the office and recruiting staff for the project. Helen Vesperini, the Country Director, has now successfully recruited the DMI national staff to run the project as well as actors, translators and a radio producer to record the spots. The Kinshasa office is up and running; and a production and broadcasting schedule prepared. Formative research is underway and message briefs are being prepared for the scriptwriters to use during quarter two. Preparations for the baseline survey have also begun, with the survey due to take place in April. We successfully recorded the first radio spot right at the end of the quarter.

As expected, we have encountered a number of challenges working in DRC. Disturbances in January in Kinshasa delayed recruitment and it took a number of rounds of recruitment until we found the right team. There were also a number of administrative hurdles for us to overcome. However, so far we have managed to successfully deal with these issues and the project is on track.

Going forward to the next quarter we have everything in place to begin writing and producing the radio spots in bulk. Broadcasting is due to start in May and we are confident that the campaign will start on time.

Jennifer Steel | Head of Operations and Finance | jennifer.steel@developmentmedia.net

COUNTRY DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The first quarter has been given over essentially to recruitment and logistical issues, notably the finding of office premises, opening a bank account, starting to meet with the authorities, recruitment, getting to grips with the complexities of DRC labour and tax laws and registering DMI as an NGO in DRC.

Recruitment

Recruitment was a key priority for this quarter. To recruit the scriptwriters we cast the net as wide as possible, advertising on the major internet portal Media Congo, on Radio Okapi and at several cultural centres and universities. To apply for the role, candidates were required to write two spots; one on family planning and one on treatment seeking when a child has a high temperature. Shortlisted candidates were interviewed by the Country Director and the Creative Director in London and then took part in a workshop testing their creative skills as well as their abilities to work collaboratively.

During this process we made the decision to second two of our experienced scriptwriters from our Burkina Faso campaign to the DRC project. They will train the DRC scriptwriters and work with them to produce scripts relevant to the DRC context. This plan was nearly disrupted due to the arrest of at least one Burkinabe activist in Kinshasa in mid-March but in the end these events just delayed their arrival by a few days.

We recruited a finance and admin assistant at the start of March. We were originally planning to recruit a qualified accountant to work as a Finance Manager but the quality of applicants was not high and so we have reorganised the finance arrangements in country. DMI's London office will now provide most of the financial support to the project and the finance and admin assistant in Kinshasa will provide basic support to the DRC office.

We have also recruited a senior Congolese member of staff who will work as "deputy" in the Kinshasa office.

For the researcher role we have hired Dr Jean René Kwilu Mondo, a Congolese public health consultant, to complete formative research and prepare the message briefs (in conjunction with the Research Manager in London) and he will also train the Kinshasa team on the messaging topics. We have also identified a couple of researchers in Kinshasa who will undertake field trips for DMI in the coming months.

Putting together the team so far has taken a little longer than we had initially planned but since we are broadcasting in different regions of DRC we were keen to have a team originating from or with experience of different parts of the country. We feel the people we have recruited so far work well together.

Production

As well as recruiting the DMI staff for the campaign we have also been recruiting actors and translators to assist with the radio spots production. We now have at least four translators lined up to translate from French into each of the four DRC languages. That number is obviously surplus to requirement but our experience to date suggests having back up capacity is crucial. We are in the process of testing all of the translators to identify our preferred partners. In addition, DMI staff members are also able to do translations on an ad hoc basis.

We have several professional actors lined up for each language. Some of them have considerable experience in radio work, others need more training, something we will be working on in early April. To ensure additional backup we will also train staff members to be able to voice scripts.

We are in the final stages of our agreement with our broadcaster - Search for Common Ground (SFCG), whose radio studio and distribution network we will be using. The arrangements have been agreed but the final contract is outstanding, due to be completed in early April.

A broadcast schedule has been prepared and has been circulated to all funders for their comments. Once these are received and the schedule adjusted the broadcast and production schedule will be finalised.

We held a practise recording sessions for spots at the end of March where we trialled the interpreters, actors and studio technicians. In the event this recording session went very well and we produced broadcast quality spots on the use of treated bed nets in each of the 4 languages.

Office

As well as recruiting our staff and production team we have set up a permanent office. The DMI office is located in Quartier GB and is very convenient for the SFCG studio where we will be recording the radio spots. There have been a number of logistical issues (electricity cuts, internet access etc.) to deal with which have been time consuming but workable solutions to these issues have now been found.

Contact with Government

We have met with Professor Vincent Lunkuku from the Communications Department and with Dr Kalume Tutu; head of the Family Health division as well as with Dr Marie-Thérèse Kyunga Banza from the Family Planning side. Both Professor Lunkuku and Dr Kalume stressed that MCH is a top priority for their ministry this year. We will remain in touch with these officials throughout the year. Our next priorities are forging ahead with more meetings with the authorities, notably with Information Minister Lambert Mende, who has either been travelling or very busy in the past few weeks.

Helen Vesperini | Country Director | helen.vesperini@developmentmedia.net

RESEARCH

We developed a message broadcasting and production calendar, in which messages are weighted according to their predicted impact on child mortality. To do this we used our model predictions (which were calculated using the Lives Saved Tool LiST), to weight our messages so that those behaviours which are predicted to save the most lives will be broadcast most intensively.

During this first 3 month period we have been reviewing existing literature on maternal and child health practices in DRC, to identify the barriers and obstacles to behaviour change, as well as facilitating factors and levers to encourage the adoption of healthy practices. As part of this process we have also utilised tools produced by UNICEF as well as WHO recommendations, in order to identify the core messages on which our spots will be based. This formative research has been summarised and distilled into one page message briefs, which will then be used by our creative team to form the basis of their script writing. This work has been significantly aided by input from Dr Jean René Kwilu Mondo, a Congolese public health consultant with many years of experience and contextual knowledge about the health issues that affect rural Congolese families.

In addition to formative research and the creation of message briefs, preparations for the baseline quantitative impact evaluation have been underway. Helen and Joanna met with Professor Patrick Kalambayi Kayembe at the Kinshasa School of Public Health (KSPH) who was identified as a suitably experienced academic researcher with whom we could partner. We negotiated a contractual agreement with KSPH who will now oversee the independent collection of survey data to evaluate the impact of our radio campaign. A research protocol and questionnaire have been written and submitted for ethical approval to the KSPH ethical review committee. Training of fieldworkers and the baseline survey are scheduled to be carried out April-May. The questionnaire will be conducted among a sample of 900 mothers of a child aged under five years and will measure maternal and child health behaviours and knowledge. Data on socio-demographic characteristics and media penetration will also be collected. The survey will be taking place in two regions of Bandundu province, Kenge - an intervention area where the local radio station will be broadcasting DMI spots and Oshwe - a control area where residents will not hear DMI messages since no Search for Common Ground (SFCG) radio stations broadcast in this area. Having a control area for comparison will help us to attribute any changes in knowledge and behaviours to DMI's campaign.

We are now putting together a plan to conduct some additional qualitative field research trips in the second and third quarters of 2015. This would allow us to conduct focus groups in rural areas of Bandundu and/or Bas Congo (since these are accessible by car from our Kinshasa office).

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CREATIVE REPORT

The first quarter was focused on selecting and recruiting strong local scriptwriters for the campaign, covered in detail in the Country Director's report. Our scriptwriting team is now in place and will commence writing in quarter two.

Photos from the actors' rehearsal:

