

A conversation with Matthew Lavoie of Development Media International on October 15, 2014

Participants

- Matthew Lavoie – Burkina Faso Country Director, Development Media International
- Timothy Telleen-Lawton – Research Analyst, GiveWell
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Note: This set of notes was compiled by GiveWell and gives an overview of the major points made by Mr. Lavoie.

Summary

GiveWell spoke with Mr. Lavoie, Country Director of DMI's Burkina Faso program. Topics included the languages DMI uses in the Burkina Faso campaign, details about Burkinabé health officials, and DMI's funding situation.

Languages DMI broadcasts in

The only common language in Ouagadougou is French. Most African languages spoken in Burkina Faso do not have written scripts – they are spoken-word only. Though there was an effort in the 1980s and 90s to create written systems for some of the languages, these written systems are not widely used.

French is the best language to use for DMI's production process – it is the most widely understood among DMI and radio station staff.

When DMI staff are recording spots in Ouagadougou, they must translate the French script word-for-word into an African language version, which will be recorded. DMI uses a written phonetic guide for this process. DMI employs three Gourmanché speakers, who work on the Gourmanché translations. Jula, a trade language widely used across West Africa, has many regional variations – it can be challenging to arrive at a Jula translation through scriptwriter consensus.

DMI's current funding situation

Two funders are supporting DMI programs in Burkina Faso next year – Alive & Thrive, and Strengthening Partnerships, Results, and Innovations in Nutrition Globally (SPRING). [Since this interview, DMI has also secured funding from Comic Relief and from the Vitol Foundation towards its national scale-up in Burkina Faso.]

Alive & Thrive

Alive & Thrive has funded further programming on promoting exclusive breastfeeding. Previously, Alive & Thrive had operated primarily in Vietnam, which has strong national radio listenership and one language. This is a hugely different context than Burkina Faso, where audiences mainly listen to community radio and many languages are spoken.

Alive & Thrive is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

SPRING

SPRING has funded programming on broadly promoting better nutrition. SPRING is funding a campaign in Bogandé, as well as in other regions. DMI would like to demonstrate that it is able to have a bigger impact with nutrition messaging than has been reported in the RCT midline results.

SPRING is part of a larger initiative operating in parts of Niger and Burkina Faso. SPRING is funded by USAID.

Room for more funding

DMI has plans for campaigns beyond the scope of the SPRING and Alive & Thrive grants. Full scale up would involve spots twelve months a year in up to 28 stations, as well as some level of energy and programming assistance, such as buying/lending a solar system for each radio station as part of the contract for broadcast airtime. DMI has also considered running another RCT in Burkina Faso, such as a multiple-armed study that would attempt to measure the impact of long format programming versus spots-only.

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