

CHAD

AND THE DARFUR REFUGEE CRISIS

GOZ BEIDA

Radio Sila

ABECHE

*Radio Voix
de Ouaddai*

IRIBA

*Radio
Absoun*

*Internews
Humanitarian
Information
Service*

2005-2012

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Women pack weekly rations of flour, corn and cooking oil from a CARE International food distribution center onto the back of their donkey in Iridimi refugee camp near Iriba, in eastern Chad.



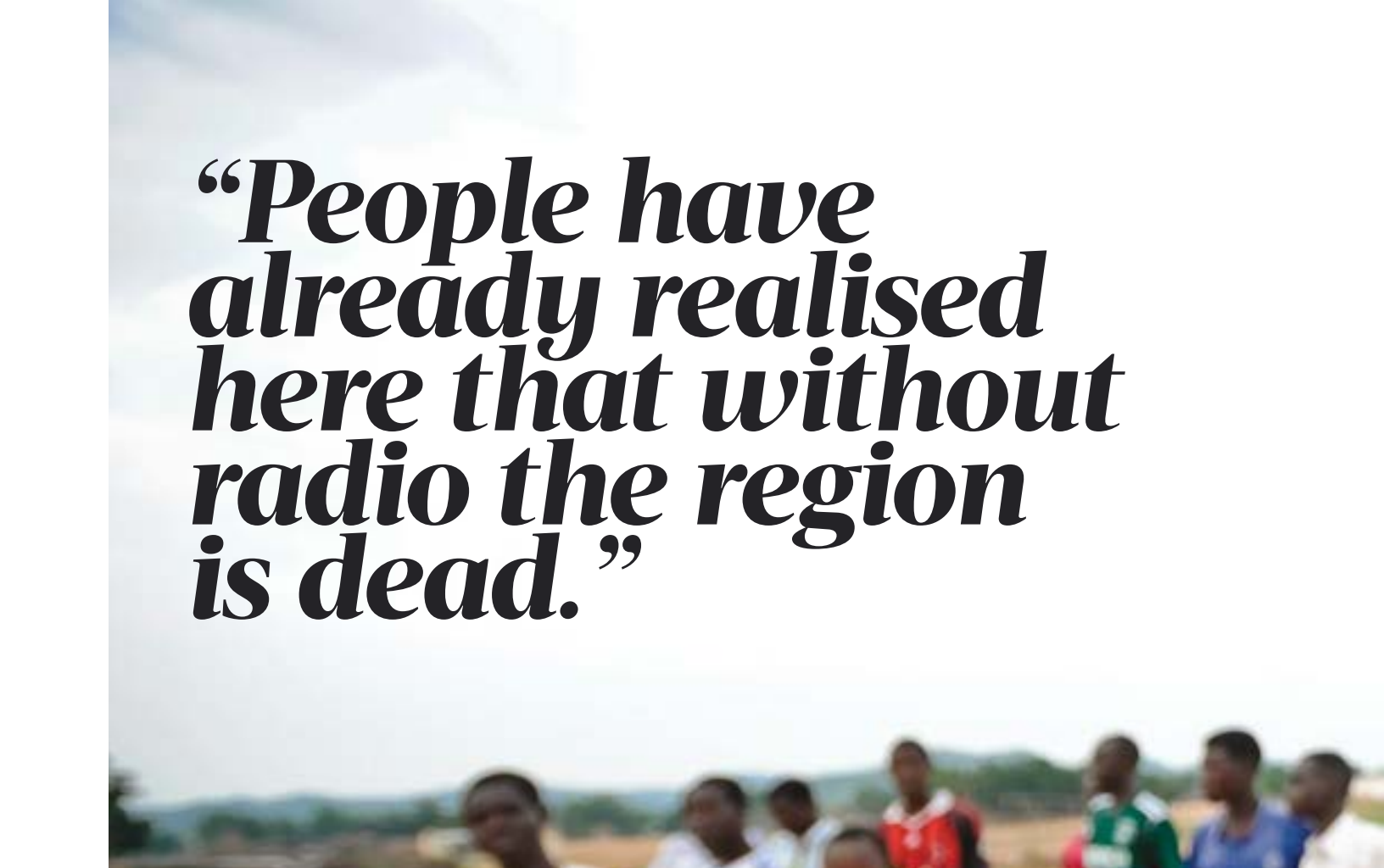


INTERNEWS BUILT THREE humanitarian radio stations in Eastern Chad to help those fleeing the violence in Darfur to receive the critical news and information they needed to survive. Seven years after the first station went on air, Internews is leaving eastern Chad as funding to international agencies has significantly reduced. Internews has spent the past year preparing the stations for independence, including establishing rent-free premises, community governing boards and marketing strategies. **JOURNALIST CELESTE HICKS** and **PHOTOGRAPHER MERIDITH KOHUT** spent a month with the stations in July 2012 to document the past seven years – and what the future holds as these enormously popular stations strike out on their own.





Radio Absoun journalist Mahamad Zen Hassan conducts a live radio show in Iriba, in eastern Chad.



“People have already realised here that without radio the region is dead.”

EASTERN CHAD

IT'S A PERFECTLY PEACEFUL evening in eastern Chad. The sun is just beginning to tip towards the horizon, casting a golden glow over the hundreds of thatched roofs which make up the Djabal Darfur refugee camp. All around is the gentle clattering of pots and pans and the sloshing of water as women prepare their evening meal to break the long, hot Ramadan fast.

Eighteen year-old Rahma Mohamed Ibed, with a radio glued to his ears and a crowd of admiring youngsters at his feet, sees us straight away and heads over.

“What are you listening to?” I ask him. He smiles bashfully and turns down his portable radio.

“I listen to the radio all day,” he says. “In the afternoons to Radio Sila when it comes on air at 4pm, and then the rest of the time I listen to BBC on shortwave or Sudanese radio.”

We sit outside Rahma's thatched cottage; the first hints of a crescent moon appearing in the darkening sky behind him; a shaft of honey-coloured sunset illuminates his face as he talks animatedly about his love of radio.

“Radio Sila promotes friendship between the journalists, the people in Goz Beida and the refugees. If you have a ques-

tion and you don't know the answer, you can call them or text them and they will reply,” he says enthusiastically.

“I would really love to be a journalist one day because I see what an important service they provide in the community. One day I lost my six year-old brother when we had gone out wood collecting – I called Madjihinguem and I told him to broadcast a message for people to look for him. Someone in the community found him and called up to tell us where he was.”

Madjihinguem (Madji) Nguinabe is a 29-year old journalist who works at Radio Sila, a community radio station in Goz Beida set up by the non-profit organisation Internews.

Madji says working at Radio Sila has fundamentally changed him: “The Madji of today knows about health, education, the environment, agriculture. The Madji of yesterday didn't know anything about health or education, or anything to do with the community,” he says. “What I like best about being a journalist is being close to the community.”

It's a time of fundamental change for Radio Sila, too. The station became independent in July 2012 after seven years of funding and support by Internews came to an end. Madji says the radio is essential for the refugees and local Chadian population, and that understanding what the community needs, and encouraging young people to participate in the radio, is vital if it is to survive.

“A community without a radio is worth nothing,” he says “People have already realised here that without radio the region is dead.”



Rahma Mohamed Ibed, 18, listens to Radio Sila after playing soccer in DJabal refugee camp near Goz Beida, in eastern Chad. A self-proclaimed radio fanatic, Rahma fled to Chad after the Janjaweed attacked his village and killed several members of his family.

Women wait with their babies to be seen by doctors at a free clinic in Gouroukoun IDP camp near Goz Beida, in eastern Chad.

Early days

INTERNEWS' WORK IN CHAD came to life in 2005 in response to a very real need for information from the hundreds of thousands of people who were fleeing violence in Sudan's Darfur region. From 2003, a campaign of violence against non-Arab populations in western Sudan by government-sponsored 'Janjaweed' Arab militias led to the deaths of thousands of Fur, Massalit and Zaghawa people; around two million people were displaced inside Darfur and its believed tens of thousands were killed. Two hundred and sixty five thousand people fled over the border into neighboring Chad. The refugees found themselves in an extremely isolated region; many local people were semi-nomadic and the government presence was weak. The environment was harsh, dusty and arid, wells and tree-cover few and far between. Darfuri families had been split up at the border, mothers and fathers had lost children and each other in bombing raids; many people were hungry or injured but were unable to communicate their needs as they didn't speak the same language as the host communities.





DAOUSSA MOHAMMED, the current director of Radio Absoun, the first of three radio stations built by Internews in Iriba, returned to the area about a month after the refugees started arriving in 2004.

“It was really horrible,” he recalls. “The image that stays with me was a woman who arrived from the border with a baby on her back. The baby was dead but the mother hadn’t even realised.”

He says that lack of information was critical. “It was really difficult to communicate with anyone at that time. It was before mobile phones, there were a few satellite phones but they didn’t work everywhere. The only way to communicate was by word of mouth or by writing letters, but it was so slow.”

It was into this context that Mark Frohardt, at the time Internews’ Vice President for Africa, made the first of many trips to eastern Chad. “It was a really bad situation,” he says. “The level of distress suffered by the refugees was shocking. They were confused and trying to survive in this sparse environment with no access to resources.”

It soon became obvious to Frohardt that a service to put the refugees in touch with the humanitarian agencies who were beginning to arrive to help them would be of enormous benefit – it seemed that either the Darfuris were mistrustful or had not been made aware of the help that was available.

“The Darfur population previously had very little access to the outside world and experience of the humanitarian community,” he says. “What they desperately needed was access to local information in a language they understood – could they go home? Where were the local services and who were all these foreigners who said they were coming to help?”

Frohardt realised that the Sudanese restrictions on any kind of activities by foreigners would make it impossible to set up a radio station actually inside Darfur. But it looked possible to set something up in Chad, close to the border. Talks had already been going on with the US government’s Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI), a funding body set up to provide rapid response to situations of conflict and political transition.

On December 5th, 2005 Daoussa Mohammed was the first Zaghawa voice on Radio Absoun in Iriba as it went live on air. “I remember it really clearly, it was the first program that Radio Absoun did, and I was the first person to present that evening,” says Daoussa with a big smile on his face. “When I went back to my neighborhood that evening everyone was really congratulating me! It was great. I was really proud.”

RADIO IS A PARTICULARLY POWERFUL MEDIUM IN A COUNTRY LIKE CHAD WHERE NATIONAL LITERACY LEVELS ARE ONLY 28%.



Radio Absoun station manager, Daoussa Mohammed, works as a technician during a live radio show in Iriba, in eastern Chad.

George Papagiannis was one of the first project directors in early 2006. He says one of the biggest challenges was developing listeners’ understanding of what an independent radio should be - both the Sudanese refugees and the Chadian host population previously only had access to state-owned media which was largely designed for propa-



ganda. “We had to persuade people to trust the radio,” he said. “We had to find ways to bring information to people in an interesting and entertaining way.”

Other pressing issues at the beginning were the conflicts that began to emerge between the Chadian communities – who had initially welcomed the refugees – and the Darfuris. One of the often quoted statistics is that before the arrival of the refugees Chadian women would walk something like 1-3 kilometers a day in search of firewood; after the refugees arrived some women reported having to walk 30-

40 kilometers. In a region ravaged by conflict, rebel groups and badly disciplined army units, this put the women at incredible risk and cases of rape and attacks became almost everyday news.

“We started a series of programs called ‘Crossroads,’” says Papagiannis. “We were trying to be a community safety valve – to sit the two groups down together and find out how they felt about the problems. If we couldn’t get them into the studio we would send the reporters out to the camps.”

RADIO IS A particularly powerful medium in a country like Chad where national literacy levels are only 28%. Many thousands of people leave school after primary level, and only access their news through aural sources such as word-of-mouth, rumors or phone calls from friends and family. Newspapers have tiny circulations and are seen as the preserve of the urban intellectual elite – they’re simply not available in the east, and even in N’Djamena they often sell only about 3,000 copies a week.

With the initial success of launching Radio Absoun under their belt, Internews was able to expand their network. OTI agreed to fund a second station, Voix de Ouaddai, which would be based in Abeche and cover the four camps between the town and the Sudanese border – Gaga, Farchana, Breguing and Treguing, home to over 80,000 Sudanese refugees.

In 2007, UNHCR agreed to assist with the establishment of a third radio station in Goz Beida – Radio Sila was to cover two refugee camps at Goz Amer near Koukou-Angarana and Djabal at Goz Beida, as well as the more than one hundred thousand displaced Chadians who had been forced from their homes by the continuing violence between rebel movements and an explosion in inter-ethnic conflict.

As well as the Zaghawa broadcasts which had begun from Radio Absoun in Iriba, Voix de Ouaddai and Radio Sila added broadcasts in Fur, Massalit, Chadian Arabic and Dadjo.

INTERNEWS BELIEVES that this ability to reach out to the refugees with information in their own languages was one of the unique selling points for the project. This was backed up by Internews research in 2009. “Thanks a lot to Radio Sila. Radio Sila broadcasts in a language that everybody understands, and it is through this channel that we get informed about what has happened in the neighboring and beyond,” said resident Ramadane Ousmane in Djabal refugee camp.



OVER THE YEARS INTERNEWS HAS TRAINED AND EMPLOYED ABOUT SIXTY LOCAL CHADIAN JOURNALISTS AND DARFUR REFUGEE CORRESPONDENTS.

Mark Frohardt agrees: “People had heard of broadcasts in Arabic, but even that didn’t really help most people. The idea that there could be programs in Zaghawa just blew people away.”

The three stations also have a commitment to training and best practise in common. Before Radio Absoun even turned on its transmitter, all the new recruits had been through an intensive journalism training program, including recording audio, mixing on Adobe Audition editing software, presenting programs and writing balanced and properly-sourced news copy. In later years, three expert Resident Journalism Advisors were appointed to directly support the journalists at each station.



Many of the Chadians Internews hired had not benefited from a decent education, but as Houda Malloum, a 30-year-old journalist who worked for Internews between 2006-9 explains, Internews bridged that gap. “In my opinion Internews was more of a school than a radio – it was a place where I learnt everything I needed to know about journalism,” says Malloum, who later went on to work in communications at the UN Mission Minurcat. “I learned how to present a news program, I learned how to make a whole program, how to go out reporting.”

Over the years Internews has trained and employed about 60 local Chadian journalists and Darfur refugee correspondents – a remarkable achievement in a region of Chad where there is only one other radio station – the state-run ONRTV.

This commitment to training has continued throughout the life of the project, and even included training for journalists who worked in other private FMs in Chad. For example, training was given in 2008 for 40 radio journalists from all over Chad on gender-based violence - most of them

As part of his reporting for a story about access to health care for refugee and local Chadian women, veteran Radio Sila journalist Adam Oumar interviews Dr. Was Ismael Ba Bachar, Nurse Memadji Bra Pelagie, and Sadia Mohamed Adam who brought her baby Mahamad Mahmoud Abdakkah to the Goz Beida Feeding Center for Children to be treated for malnourishment.

said they’d never done anything like that before. “The training actually enabled me to become more aware of the situation of women in Chad as a journalist, but also as a man,” said Nara Hantabou of FM Liberté at the time. “Now, I will take the lead in gender programs because I discovered the suffering of women. I think that I can also help my colleagues to change their attitude to women.”

EACH OF THE THREE stations pioneered techniques for radio programming which had scarcely been seen before on any of Chad’s independent radio stations, such as interactive phone-in shows and live discussion programs. In the east, where there had never been any independent radio stations, and only a small outpost of the national state broadcaster ONRTV, sophisticated equipment to take a number of callers live on air simply did not exist.

As the stations began to consolidate and expand their output, live discussions went on to become one of Internews’ most powerful tools. “We sponsored a series of discussion programs on Voix de Ouaddai about FGM (Female Genital Mutilation) in the camps” says Nalga Kahir from the UNFPA. “There was just complete confusion amongst the population. You would hear that one marabout said this, a traditional leader said that. They didn’t understand each other and they all needed to know what the truth was.”

Anonymous calls to the radio stations proved to be a really effective device for convincing people to express how they really felt, she explains: “They didn’t want to talk about it themselves in the community because everyone disagreed, they fell out. But on the radio, there was a wide range of trusted sources that people would listen to.”



Children play in DJabal refugee camp near Goz Beida, Chad.

A woman in a patterned dress is rolling a colorful wheel on a dirt path. In the background, there are several wooden structures with thatched roofs, likely market stalls, and a person in a white robe standing near a sign. The scene is set in a rural, hilly area under a bright sky.

GOZ BEIDA

Radio Sila

THE LAST TIME I PASSED THROUGH Goz Beida market in 2009 I was wearing a military helmet and rolling along in an armoured personnel carrier with five Irish soldiers from the UN mission Minurcat. I recall the slightly bemused expressions of the residents and their donkeys as the soldiers in full heavy combat gear leapt from the back of the tank to patrol the market, uttering a cheery ‘Salam Aleykum’ and holding their guns down to one side to indicate they were peacekeepers.



CHAD WAS THEN IN THE MIDDLE of a complex rebellion which had its roots in the Darfur conflict. Just one year earlier about 50 pick-up trucks of rebels had passed through Goz Beida before crossing the entire breadth of the country to arrive at the gates of the presidential palace in N'Djamena where they came within hours of topping President Idriss Deby Itno.

The legacy of that devastating conflict has been easy to see in the work of Radio Sila - for example in 2008-9 they organised a series of live interactive programs about unexploded ordnance with the Mine Action group and the local mine action center. Speaking at the time, Alfadil Zene Alio, the presenter of the show, said "IDPs called us to ask for the toll-free number and the guest answered right away to explain who to call and what to do in the case of danger."



Women fill buckets of water from taps built by UNHCR in Djabal refugee camp near Goz Beida.

Since that conflict has been brought to a close, Goz Beida has quietly melted back into the Sahelian scrub. The convoys of white UN and NGO vehicles and expatriate staff are conspicuous in their absence; the market place has assumed its former sleepy character. A few children kick a ball about in the dust, while men gather around the edges of the market place patiently waiting for the breaking of the

STATION PROFILE

Serving refugees

IN 2004 JOURNALISTS IN GOZ BEIDA reported the pitiful sight of thousands of Darfuri women and children sheltering under the beautiful old trees which surround the town – Goz Beida is much greener and more fertile than Abeche or Iriba due to its southern location. Most of the people who were forced to make their new homes at Djabal refugee camp, and further south at Goz Amir close to Koukou-Angarana, are Massalit and Dadjo and come from the areas around Nyala in southern Darfur.

Radio Sila's important work on promoting better relations between host community and refugees has been more of a challenge than for the other stations, due to the addition in 2006 of over 100,000 Chadian people who'd been displaced by further waves of violence sparked by the conflict in Darfur. This put intense pressure on natural resources like water and firewood, and attacks on refugee women outside the boundaries of the camps became regular occurrences. Goz Beida was the base for the Irish contingent of soldiers from the Minurcat UN peacekeeping force which was in Chad from 2008-10. Radio Sila itself has played a vital role in confronting the twin issues of violence against women and competition for resources head-on.

Today the radio station has eight members – seven journalists including the director Abderezak Arabi and one technician; they also have two refugee correspondents working in Djabal camp. They serve the two refugee camps – Djabal (15,000) and Goz Amir (20,000), and the remainder of the displaced people's population at Goukouroum and other sites, as well as the town of Goz Beida. They have one transmitter and can be picked up to a distance of 70 kilometers away in towns such as Adre on the Sudanese border.

Ramadan daily fast which happens when the sun falls below the horizon.

The issue of relations between the host community in Goz Beida and the refugees and displaced people comes up in conversation in Goz Beida's market when we meet Mohamed Ali Ismael Zidane, a listener to Radio Sila.

“There have been problems over water sources - who has priority? The refugees want water but the local people say it was us who dug that well. The Radio Sila programs taught us community orientation, they tell us that the water doesn't belong to anyone, it's for all of us.” He says he likes Radio Sila's' discussion programs best; “They call people such as Intermon who run the wells here and they ask them how people should share water, so then all the communities come to understand that he is thirsty, I am thirsty, we're all thirsty. So we've all managed to open our minds.”

Radio Sila, he says, has “helped us to understand the culture of the refugees, who they are and where they come from, and the displaced people. Thanks to the information that we received on the radio we can now get closer to the two communities to find solutions together.”

Conflict resolution and promoting 'peaceful cohabitation' is a theme I take up in more detail with Abdelrezak Arabi,

JOURNALIST PROFILE

Madjihinguem Nguinabe

I was always really interested in the work of radio stations and I'd heard about Internews, so I asked for a work placement. I really wanted to see what journalism was like because I didn't know anything about it. Voix de Ouaddai in Abeche fortunately took me on as a volunteer in 2009, and I moved here to Goz Beida to work at Radio Sila in 2010.

Now I've learnt the trade of journalism I can say that I love the job – it's even better than I thought it would be. I like it because information and communication can really help the community. We've had lots of occasions when people have come to us at Radio Sila and said 'without that information that you broadcast there would have been a problem in the community'.

But my favourite thing is reporting – being close to the people and finding out about their daily life.



The best program I ever did was about sexual harassment at the university. I interviewed a girl who had been harassed by one of her professors. He said that it was her that had asked for it, and she was very upset because no one would believe her. We made a program and brought it to the attention of the university authorities and it forced them to give the professor a warning and a disciplinary hearing. These kinds of programs about violence against women – rape, early marriage, forced marriage etc. – these are the most important.

I really believe in the role of Radio Sila in the development of the region. I believe it has helped the three communities here – refugees, internally displaced people and the local population – to understand each other better because now they can hear about each other in their own language. There used to be many problems here – four or five years ago refugee women used to get attacked and raped when they went to work their fields, and the Chadian host community used to feel neglected because the aid agencies didn't help them. It is much better now and I think the radio has played a role in that.

I am optimistic about the future of the radio. I've chosen to stay on as a volunteer full time with six other colleagues. I want to help it to become independent and permanent. I will give my body and soul to make it work – everything that I already am and I will test my new skills such as marketing. I think the key thing is to train young people to take over from us, so that they feel the radio belongs to them. Everyone says they think Radio Sila is a vital service, so we have to find enough money to make sure that it remains.

Radio Sila's manager, in their new headquarters, a pre-fab container on the outskirts of the town. The station's diesel-fuelled generator is rumbling in the background, but providing welcome power to his office's air conditioner. Abdezerak's face lights up when I ask him what was the station's greatest achievement.

LISTENER MOHAMED ALI ISMAEL ZIDANE SAYS RADIO SILA HAS "HELPED US TO UNDERSTAND THE CULTURE OF THE REFUGEES ... THANKS TO THE INFORMATION THAT WE RECEIVED ON THE RADIO WE CAN NOW GET CLOSER TO THE TWO COMMUNITIES TO FIND SOLUTIONS TOGETHER."



"The best example I can give is a few years ago in Kerfi, an international NGO put up a notice of recruitment (for soldiers). A rumor went around that one community was being favoured in the recruitment over another community. By the time the rumor got here, travelling word of mouth, it had really got skewed - people thought that a war had already started between the two groups."

Radio Sila's work is crucial in preventing these misunderstandings he believes: "We went straight there to the field

and verify exactly what had happened. And suddenly people saw that it wasn't a real problem between the communities but because of a notice of recruitment. It was nothing."

"We talk, we discuss, we educate," he says about they work they do. "We contribute and for the last 5 years we've never stopped doing that. In one word Radio Sila really brings something special to the region."

After several years working myself as a journalist in Chad I came to realise that you always get what you want, but never in the way you expected. Things which you think should take five minutes take a week, and things which would be impossible elsewhere are solved immediately. Our trip to Goz Beida was no exception, and went against all our finely-laid plans. Thanks it seems to a gradually diminishing funding environment, the UN humanitarian air service flights around the east of Chad are becoming more unpredictable. We were supposed to leave Goz Beida on Friday, but were told with 20 minutes' notice on the Thursday evening that our flight was leaving.

So we missed it.

It ended up being the best thing that happened on our trip, as it gave us five full days to work with the team; from the morning news meeting, to the reporting trips and audio collection in the field, to editing their material against a tight deadline, to presenting the daily news program live on air. It was a fantastic chance to get to know everyone on a personal level.



Radio Sila journalist Madjinguem Nguinabe, 29, interviews a doctor at a free clinic in Gouroukoun IDP camp, near Goz Beida, Chad. "I love being a journalist, it's the best job in the world," says Nguinabe. "I will give everything I have, from the training and knowledge, to all my energy and spirit to keep this station running."

ONE ASPECT OF INTERNEWS' work which has been truly innovative has been their support of a network of refugee correspondents across the twelve refugee camps in the east of Chad. Their job is to be the eyes and ears of the radio station on the ground, and to provide story ideas and audio which outsiders may not be able to achieve.

"The radio is very necessary for the community because it brings people closer together and puts them in contact with each other every day," says one of the correspondents, Mohamed Adam Hamid. "It creates an atmosphere of harmony in the camps, and everyone is informed about what's going on. Any community would be worse off for not having a radio, without a radio the community is poorly informed."

Currently there are nine correspondents on the books – in Iridimi, Touloum, Am Nabak, Farchana, Gaga, Treguine, Bredjing, Djabal and Goz Amer camps. Each of them has received professional 'marantz' recording kits and several training sessions, which several of them said had made their job much easier. Previously the reporters would have to walk back to the radio station to file their reports, or send them via mobile phone. Now they can simply remove the SD card from the digital recorder and send it back to the station with someone travelling into town.

Usna Omar Arabi's house is in a quiet corner of Djabal camp; she is Radio Sila's correspondent there. Despite having given birth just seven days previously, Usna enthusiastically dusts off her recording equipment to show us how



Madjinguem Nguinabe works on the engine of his station's 4x4 after it broke down. Since becoming independent, Radio Sila is now financially responsible for maintenance and upkeep of their SUV. Journalists are fundraising to repair it.

she uses it. Her sisters and nieces crashed about in a haze of wood smoke preparing a celebratory meal for the baby's special naming ceremony.

"In Darfur there was a war going on, and the Janjaweed was killing people, and they killed our mothers and fathers and raped our sisters, so that was the reason we came," says Usna. "Now I have a new life as a journalist – it was something I always wanted to do but I didn't get chance to in Darfur. Now I go out with my microphone and people don't mind talking to me at all, it's easy."

George Papagiannis believes this focus on the local has been crucial: "Bringing the voices of real people in the refugee camps was something that just hadn't been done before. Radio had always been a top-down way of governments



Radio Sila journalist Moubarak Issakha conducts a live radio show at the radio station's headquarters in Goz Beida.

communicating with populations. Suddenly people could hear other people just like them speaking on the radio.”

The value of the refugee correspondents as the ultimate source of information about camp life was proven when I asked Usna if she knew anyone who could talk about having been influenced by a social messaging campaign on Radio Sila. Without hesitation she says “Go and see Achta, she heard about hospital births on the radio.”

“BRINGING THE VOICES OF REAL PEOPLE IN THE REFUGEE CAMPS WAS SOMETHING THAT JUST HADN'T BEEN DONE BEFORE. RADIO HAD ALWAYS BEEN A TOP-DOWN WAY OF GOVERNMENTS COMMUNICATING WITH POPULATIONS. SUDDENLY PEOPLE COULD HEAR OTHER PEOPLE JUST LIKE THEM SPEAKING ON THE RADIO.”



Achta’s compound backs onto Usna’s through a complicated warren of huts. “I remember when I heard about hospital births on the radio. The program said that doctors could help you if you had complications. Other women

were doing it too so I decided that I would go to a clinic. My first time at the hospital I lost a lot of blood, but it was safe there and they gave me a transfusion. The next time the baby was really big so I needed help to get it out. I also found out on the radio that when you’ve had the baby you can bring it back several months later and get vaccination and more care.”

That first hospital baby, Malia (named after Barack Obama’s daughter) is now four years old and playing happily beside her mother. Achta says she won’t go back to giving birth at home: “Having a baby in the house and at the hospital is very different, if you do it at home the traditional midwives only have a small amount of information and sometimes the baby or the mother – or both – can die. But when you go to the hospital, they know what they’re doing and they can save you if something goes wrong.”

Internews’ own research into the impacts of so-called ‘spots’ - short public service announcements on all sorts of health, sanitation and education campaigns which are broadcast in between music and programs - also shows they’ve been vital in promoting women’s health and well-being. A 2010 survey showed that 48% of respondents said a PSA they’d heard about fistula was useful because it informed them of free health care available to women with the condition. 92% of people said they’d heard spots about schooling for girls and 85% about FGM.



37-year old Achta Abakar Ibrahim, a Darfur refugee and mother of ten, listens to her radio at her home in Djabal camp, near Goz Beida. "When I heard about giving birth in a hospital on Radio Sila, it was the first time anyone suggested that to me," she said. "My first six children I had at home, and although thanks to God I didn't have any serious problems it was just so much easier in the hospital. There they know what can go wrong and that made me so much more confident!"

UNHCR's research also suggests that the number of hospital births has increased by 21% in recent years; something which they have partly associated with the work of the radio campaigns.

"We chose to promote hospital births on the radio because it can travel a lot further than we can. At UNHCR we only have a mandate to operate in the refugee camps but

the radio can reach people who don't even live there," says Issa Sabaye, program assistant at UNHCR Goz Beida.

This combined with in-depth news coverage, and lively on-air discussions about the issues, has helped communities access better services.

"Before these programs started not many women went for pre-natal consultations or to give birth in hospitals, but today if you go and chat to people who work in the health centers they all say that there's been a real change in terms of how many people use the centers. When we talk to people, whether that's refugees, local people or displaced people. Everyone talks about the value they place on the radio, because it's the only communication tool available in this region."

There has also been evidence that radio campaigns have encouraged mothers to bring their children to vaccination campaigns. UNICEF research shows that 86% of people who turned up to a polio vaccination campaign had heard about it on the radio, and Internews' own research supports this:

"During the wet season many children miss out on vaccination because they are working in the fields with their mothers," said the Chief of camp in 2008; "Now we're using the radio mothers hear the call on the radio, while they're working and then come to the health center."



Radio Sila journalist, Madjihinguem Nguinabe, leads an editorial meeting with the staff at the station's headquarters in Goz Beida, Chad.



Radio Sila journalist Rachat Hassom Taha, 30, works as a technician during a live radio program in Goz Beida, Chad. In February, Hassom was awarded the 2011 prize of excellence in journalism in a national competition organized by the Chadian High Council of Communication (Haut Conseil de la Communication, HCC) to recognize the hard work of local journalists.





ABECHE

Radio Voix de Ouaddai

A BECHE IS A BUSY, EXPENSIVE TOWN. A cross-roads for people coming from all over Chad, traders from Sudan and huge herds of animals being driven across Chad's eastern scrublands by nomadic communities. A rash of dusty cement buildings stuck in the middle of the desert, surrounded on all sides by spiky terracotta-coloured rock formations.

It's a place where people are less willing to be open about their experiences. As we wander round the hot market, slipping on mud and debris and reeling from the fetid stench coming from inside the covered meat market where various parts of innards of cows and camels are impaled on metal hooks hanging from the ceiling, our journalist companions Issaka and Abdelbagi from Radio Voix de Ouaddai tell us that it's hard to do vox pops here.



Majda Mohamed builds a shelter of sticks and swaths of cloth in Abougoudam, a village of Chadian Arab nomads. Abougoudam is in a remote area of Eastern Chad several hours drive from Abeche. To stay connected, villagers listen to Radio Voix de Ouaddai.



A GAGGLE OF WOMEN with only a scrap of cloth to protect them from the searing sun laugh and turn away when Abdelbagi approaches them with his microphone to ask them how the huge increase in prices during Ramadan is affecting their daily life.

“What are you doing here! Go away! We don’t want to speak to journalists!” shouts a surly-looking man in the meat market, sharpening his enormous cleaver menacingly as he gestures for us to leave. A crowd of barefoot and ragged talibe (orphaned Koranic school children) are tailing us through the tight alleys of the market, some of them wearing their metal begging bowls as hats.

“Yes it’s harder to work here than in the refugee camps,” confesses Abdelbagi as we talk about their day-to-day lives. But these are determined, well-trained journalists who

know value of getting real people’s voices on the radio. On our way back to base, Issaka and Abdelbagi start shouting loudly at the radio blaring in the car – it’s tuned to the state-broadcaster RNT, and it’s fair to say they think it’s rubbish.

“Listen to that, they let that one boring minister talk for five minutes!” shouts Abdelbagi. “Where are the real people? This is so boring!”

“They leave all the essential information until the end. Where is the story!” says Issaka.

From their comments it’s clear that the Internews training has really got under their skin and taught them about making an interesting offer to the audience. It also backs up George Papagiannis’ point about how the Internews independent radio model has come to challenge established conceptions about what radio should be.



Radio Voix de Ouaddai journalist, Abdel-Bagui Mahamat, interviews a street market vendor while working on a story about rising food prices in downtown Abeche, Chad.

STATION PROFILE

The biggest

IN THE HEAT OF THE DARFUR REFUGEE CRISIS in the years from 2004 onwards, Abeche became the epicenter of an enormous aid effort and later of a deteriorating security situation as bandits and former rebels began to attack the aid agencies which had come to help the displaced people. The main refugee camps – Gaga (18,000), Farchana (20,000), Treguine (15,000) and Bredjing (30,000) are located about two hours' drive from the town and the dirt track leading to them became an ideal location for hundreds of vehicle hijackings by rebels based in eastern Chad and Darfur.

Radio Voix de Ouaddai became an essential source of information on security, and a way for NGOs and aid agencies to communicate with the refugee populations when it became difficult to reach them physically. This was especially the case during rebel attacks in 2008 when many humanitarian agencies decided to suspend their activities.

The biggest of the Internews stations, Voix de Ouaddai in many ways benefited from the most attention, training and visitors – being the easiest of the three stations to get to. At its highpoint, Voix de Ouaddai had nine hours of programming a day, and featured a number of specialised and popular programs such as "She Speaks, She Listens" which focused on women's issues. The station has two transmitters, (their main antennae has recently been moved inside the newly-purchased compound) one in Abeche and one near the refugee camps; both have a coverage range of about 70 kilometers which makes it possible to listen in the border regions.

Today the station has nine full-time members of staff including two people specially trained in marketing, and the station manager Abderassoul. Unlike Radio Sila and Radio Absoun, they face stiff competition from the state-owned broadcaster ONRTV, yet they have the benefit of several national and international companies being based in Abeche who may be more willing to pay for advertising airspace.

BACK AT BASE, the transition period at the end of the Internews funding has provided the long-suffering station manager Abderassoul Mahamat Bahar with a few headaches. Radio Voix de Ouaddai has been off air for three weeks because of a problem with the transmitter. Abderassoul is still waiting for the delivery of some transmitter equipment from Paris.

In the meantime he's made the decision to take down the huge radio mast that used to grace one of Abeche's iconic hilltops and bring it inside the station's newly-purchased compound. But no one quite knows how to re-erect the 25 meter mast. Sitting on a plastic chair outside Voix De Ouaddai's offices, Abderassoul and I chat about the challenges ahead for the radio station as two men hang precariously off the side of the red and white antennae, attached only with what looks like a cloth nappy. They're trying to fit the remaining

ten meters to the top of the mast. "We might be back on air tomorrow," says Abderassoul hopefully. Someone shouts and a spanner falls in seeming slow motion with a crash down the inside of the metal tower.

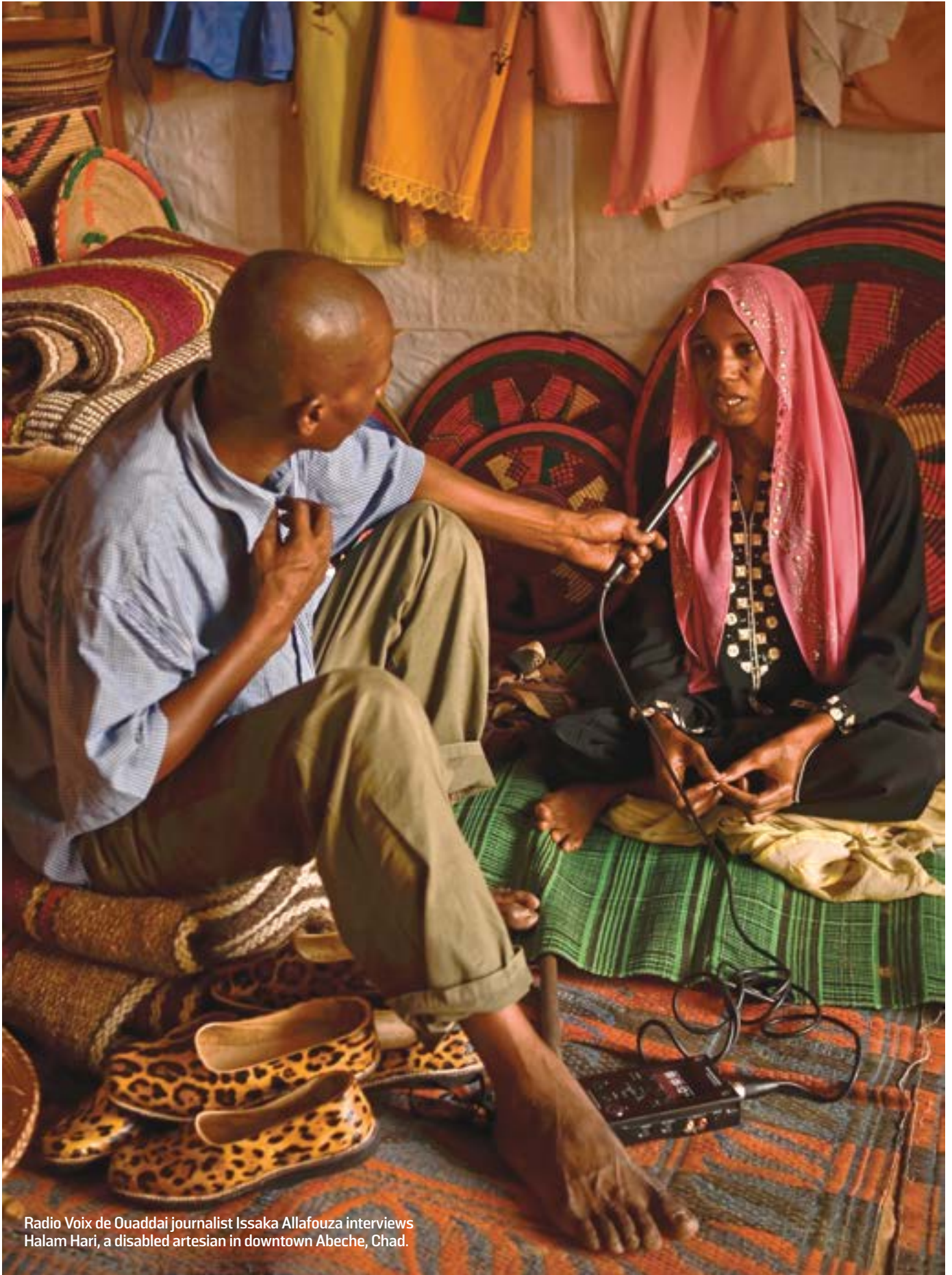
And the geese that looks likely to lay the golden eggs for Voix De Ouaddai could be advertising. Because Abeche is bigger and better connected to N'Djamena, there are a number of important Chadian and international companies in the town, such as Ecobank and Ethiopian Airlines, who have expressed an interest in paying for advertising spots on the radio. "It's slow to get started" says Abderassoul, "But we've already got promises of 60,000CFA for a sensitisation campaign from MSF and the Chadian League of Human Rights. We know no one wants to pay for their news, but I'm confident we can make it even if we have to reduce our budget."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 31





Youth fetch water from a community well in Abougoudam, a village of Chadian Arab nomads. To stay connected, villagers listen to Radio Voix de Ouaddai, a community radio station that has been financially supported and whose journalists have been trained by Internews for the past seven years.



Radio Voix de Ouaddai journalist Issaka Allafouza interviews Halam Hari, a disabled artisan in downtown Abeche, Chad.

JOURNALIST PROFILE

Iissaka Allafouza

It was my childhood dream to be a journalist. When I was little, I used to love listening to the radio and I was always thinking about how to become a journalist.

After my BAC in 2003 I was just a simple citizen living in Abeche. I didn't know anything about the world. I looked for other jobs but nothing else seemed very interesting. I was very lucky that the next year I saw an advertisement from an NGO called Internews which said they intended to set up a radio station in eastern Chad and that they were looking for journalists. And so I jumped at the chance and to my surprise I got the job! My dream came true and I became a journalist!

We received a lot of training with Internews and I'm very grateful for that. I've learnt the rules of journalism and now I can listen to other radio stations and see that they're not being as professional as we are. I have learnt how to write, how to present, how to edit and most importantly how to make a program interesting and engaging for the audience.

I believe that being a journalist is a noble job. I've learnt that I now have a responsibility to inform and educate



people. We have a duty to show people a better way of life. A journalist should be in between people and authority, to act as a means of communication. When we make programs about problems in the refugee camps and in the town of Abeche we're playing that role – we're acting on behalf of the people, to get answers.

In Chad and in the refugee camps there are lots of people who haven't got any education, who live in the rural areas and don't know anything. Radio is the only means of communication in this region; it's a way to change people's mentality. We have to be engaged.

The best report I did was about the Am Nabak refugee camp where there were lots of problems of insecurity. I went there even though it wasn't safe. My report was about the fact that the humanitarians had pulled out because it was too dangerous. The

refugees were really in a bad state. They had no water, there was no health care. I talked about how they were suffering.

The refugees didn't know how to get in touch with the humanitarians, but my report acted as a bridge between them. After it went out the next day the local authorities said that they would improve the security situation. Then the humanitarians were able to go back to the camps and started helping people again. I think it was because of my report!

I was also very proud of my work during the rebel attacks of 2008. That year rebels came through Abeche and went to N'Djamena. There was fighting close to the town, and then bandits went everywhere stealing things. It was a very scary time, most of the international staff working for NGOs left. I made the decision to stay, and we managed to keep Radio Voix de Ouaddai on the air for the whole time. That was a very difficult thing to do, but I think we really helped the people because we were the only source of information they had – particularly the refugees who were isolated in the Darfur campaigns.

From the end of July we will have no salary. That is tough, and I am worried because I have a family and I need to feed them. But I will do what I can to make this radio station work. I've worked here for seven years and I want to continue. With God's help we will get more funding; but for now I'm here as a volunteer and I'm willing to give it a go.

RADIO VOIX DE OUADDAI in many ways looks to be in the strongest position of the three stations and it's hoping to build on the respect it's already earned as a community service. It's been a tough journey, especially during the rebel takeover in 2007 and a massive campaign of looting and pillaging which took place in the security vacuum that followed. George Papagiannis believes it was Radio Voix de Ouaddai's independence and commitment to the local population that saved it from looting when other international agencies were targeted. "Other foreign NGOs and the WFP were looted, but the radio station wasn't touched," he says. "I believe that was because the Chadians had come to see it as their own."

Voix de Ouaddai has used the period since the defeat of the rebels to develop into a service that acted on behalf of the listeners, according to Ian Noble, project director in 2009-10. "In a country with no significant democratic

traditions of media-driven accountability it strikes me as a huge breakthrough that Internews managed to create and sustain radios where a journalist could, for example, hold a microphone up to a local official after severe flooding in Abéché and ask him: why is there no adequate drainage system?"

Abeche's mayor Mahamat Salah Ahmat Adam agrees with this analysis – as a locally elected representative he believes the radio has helped to give the town's residents a voice at the level of authority. "I can give you lots of examples of how Voix de Ouaddai journalists have combed the town looking for information. When they find something that's not right, they come to me directly and ask for example 'Why is that part of town dirty? Why are those people not participating in local development?'" He added for good measure that he'd even sent in a cleaning team to a neighborhood which was affected by flooding after he was approached by the determined Voix de Ouaddai team.



Women wave their ration cards in an effort to get a bag of flour during a food distribution in Iridimi refugee camp near Iriba, in eastern Chad.

A group of women, likely from the Darfur region, are gathered under a tent. They are wearing colorful headscarves in shades of yellow, orange, and red. Some women have their arms raised, holding up a flag or a piece of fabric. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting daylight. The overall mood is one of solidarity and hope.

CONTEXT

Darfur and the refugee crisis

IN 2003-4 CONFLICT BROKE out in Sudan's western Darfur region. At first a campaign for more autonomy from local groups representing the minority Fur, Massalit and Zaghawa communities, it turned into a full-scale crisis when the Sudanese government branded it a rebellion and sent in proxy Arab militias known as the 'Janjaweed' to crack down on the two main groups, the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM).

IN THE FOLLOWING YEARS more than two million civilians were displaced and thousands killed. More than 250,000 of those ended up crossing the border into Chad where they eventually settled in twelve refugee camps along the border. Almost no one has returned home in the eight years since the conflict erupted.

At first the Darfur crisis was largely ignored by international media, but from 2005 onwards a number of Hollywood celebrities such as George Clooney and Mia Farrow, and many campaign groups, brought the suffering of the Darfuri people onto the global agenda. Finally in 2009 the

Sudanese president Omar el-Bashir was indicted by the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity, but the issuing of an arrest warrant against him has proved a hugely controversial decision.

The Darfur crisis also sparked a dangerous proxy war with neighboring Chad, with Sudan for several years hosting and sponsoring Chadian rebels, and with Chad's President Idriss Deby Itno welcoming the JEM's leadership to N'Djamena. In 2008 the Chadian rebels came within hours of toppling Deby, and in retaliation the JEM launched a lightning strike on Omdurman near Khartoum in 2009.



Radio Voix de Ouaddai journalist Issaka Allafouza, 29, interviews a woman that had taken her baby to a free clinic in Abougoudam, a village of Chadian Arab nomads in a remote area of Eastern Chad several hours away from Abeche.

Although Darfur has now fallen from the headlines – the fighting in Darfur has died down because President Bashir’s attention has been diverted by a dangerous destabilising situation emerging with newly independent South Sudan – JEM appears to have moved its operations to South Kordofan (to the east of Darfur), and a recent report said new non-Arab proxy militias have been launched against local populations. Ask any of the Sudanese refugees in the 12 Chadian camps why they do not return home and they will cite this continuing insecurity as the reason.

ASK ANY OF THE SUDANESE REFUGEES IN THE 12 CHADIAN CAMPS WHY THEY DO NOT RETURN HOME AND THEY WILL CITE THIS CONTINUING INSECURITY AS THE REASON.



IRIBA

Radio Absoun

IRIBA, A TINY WINDSWEPT town of a few thousand, has suffered disproportionately because of the huge influx of refugees. The population of the two camps closest to the town, Touloum (22,000) and Iridimi (18,000), dwarfs that of Iriba; further east another 20,000 people live in Am Nabak, not to mention the camps of Mile and Kounoungo to the south, and Oure Cassoni further north. It's thought that between 2003 and 2005 the population of this region doubled.





Hundreds of people came to have their goats vaccinated during an event sponsored by CARE in a refugee camp near Iriba, in eastern Chad. CARE representative Laognma Mysuf said they spread the word of the vaccination event through Radio Absoun. "We went on the radio to tell people to bring their animals today and also to explain the importance of getting vaccinations," he said. "For us as an NGO, if the radio wasn't here we would have to go door to door or village by village, and we wouldn't be able to succeed with our activities.

HERE THAT ISSUE of peaceful co-operation is crucial, even if many of the local people are the same Zaghawa ethnic group as the refugees. It's an exceptionally arid zone. Flying in to the airport, it's easy to see bald rings around the refugee camps where the trees and shrubs have been cleared for firewood. In the early days, one of the most common themes for news stories on Radio Absoun was attacks on women who had ventured outside the bounds of the refugee camp looking for wood.

This topic comes up in discussion in the quiet shade of an earth outhouse in the compound of Marbula Khatir Adam Moussa, the President of the Iridimi women's association. We've arrived here en masse, picking up women from all over the camp. As soon as the women saw us with microphones and cameras they flagged down our car and jumped on board – some from the shade of acacia trees, others at a monthly food distribution by WFP.

"YES THERE ARE SUBJECTS WE CAN'T DISCUSS, EVEN AMONGST OURSELVES AT THESE WOMEN'S MEETINGS ... WE LIKED THE PROGRAMS ON THE RADIO THAT COVER THESE TOPICS. WE ALL HAVE TO LEARN. WE HEAR A RANGE OF OPINIONS. MANY PEOPLE HERE HAVE NO EDUCATION AND DON'T UNDERSTAND ANYTHING."

I cautiously raise the subject of domestic violence and attacks on women. Every question we ask goes through three languages – English, French, Zaghawa and back. The women look at each other with lowered eyelids, a ray of hazy sunshine catching the vibrant colours of their headscarves. A fly buzzes loudly against the wall. The women aren't saying very much.

I ask again, and Fatamata steps forward; a beautiful woman of about 30 who arrived from Darfur in 2004, having lost her brother in the violence. She gives thought and intelligence to her answers.

"Yes there are subjects we can't discuss, even amongst ourselves at these women's meetings. We know these things go on, but it's hard for us to talk about it."

Does the radio help them to confront these subjects? "We liked the programs on the radio that cover these topics (She Speaks She listens)" she says slowly. "We all have to learn. We hear a range of opinions. Many people here have no education and don't understand anything."

This is borne out by Internews' own research that the scaling up of a special focus on women and gender-based violence (GBV) programs was extremely popular. The 'She Speaks She Listens' strand, which was launched as a regular

feature in 2006, became one of the most popular programs, and was backed up with 'listening groups' which were formed in the camps to feedback directly about the content of the programs.

Using female voices to present the program was also a major breakthrough in establishing trust – one of the first people to work on the program was Houda Malloum.



“You know women are really not listened to here. Even in the morning editorial meeting with my colleagues I would find that people didn’t listen. I would make my suggestions for a story, and they think, oh it’s a woman who’s speaking. And also people think that a woman who is a journalist is too free and open – you have to travel and meet all kinds of people and you know as a woman here you can’t do that.”

But she adds that weakness became a real strength in the camps: “It was different, there I met lots of women who were open. They understood that the radio could be in their interests. They were much more open with me than they would ever be with a man. It became a real advantage.”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 40



Schoolgirls attend science class at a Touloum refugee camp near Iriba in Eastern Chad. Many women interviewed said that the Internews-supported community radio station, Radio Absoun, has helped create a forum to discuss women’s rights and educate listeners about taboo issues such as domestic abuse and FGM.

STATION PROFILE

The first on air

RADIO ABSOUN WAS THE FIRST Internews station to go on air in December 2005, partly thanks to the work of local Chadian NGO Ades, which had been already advocating strongly for a local radio in the area. Radio Absoun (which is the name of one of the biggest wadis in the area) was aimed at three of the more northerly Darfur refugee camps – Am Nabak (16,000) on the Sudanese border, Touloum (23,000) and Iridimi (18,000). Radio Absoun's coverage area was expanded with the provision of two relay transmitters by the UN Mission Minurcat in 2009 – this allowed them to reach Oure Cassoni in the north, and Mile and Kounoungou camps in the south near Guereda.

Iriba and Bahai are the only sizeable towns in this extremely arid region where much of the local population is nomadic or semi-nomadic. Radio is a vital means of communication for these communities, and particularly for the refugees who stay in regular contact with their Zaghawa families just over the border in Sudan.

Resource conflict became one of the major issues facing the populations of the three camps and Radio Absoun became adept at producing informative discussions and debates about how to share resources, and how to manage conflicts that broke out with the host population. Even when the east of Chad was beset with rebel attacks in 2008, Radio Absoun managed to stay on air, despite many humanitarian agencies pulling out.

Today five members of staff remain at Radio Absoun, which is now being managed by ADES. Radio Absoun maintains a network of three refugee correspondents – two in Touloum camp and one in Iridimi – who report daily on the issues affecting the refugees. This has been an important service which keeps refugees up to date, even if the Chadian journalists from base are unable to travel to the camps.

THE DAY-TO-DAY WORK of Radio Absoun is a little more prosaic, dealing with the realities of living in such an isolated, arid region for eight years. We follow Mohamed Adam Hamid, Internews' correspondent in Touloum camp, as he goes in search of vox pops about the rising costs of living in the camp marketplace. Things have been difficult for him over the last few weeks, as he's heard that Radio Absoun is about to go independent and he's been worrying about what the future might hold. He tells me people are starting to ask him why Radio Absoun has been broadcasting intermittently for the last few weeks. Nevertheless he beams as he explains his proudest journalistic moment.

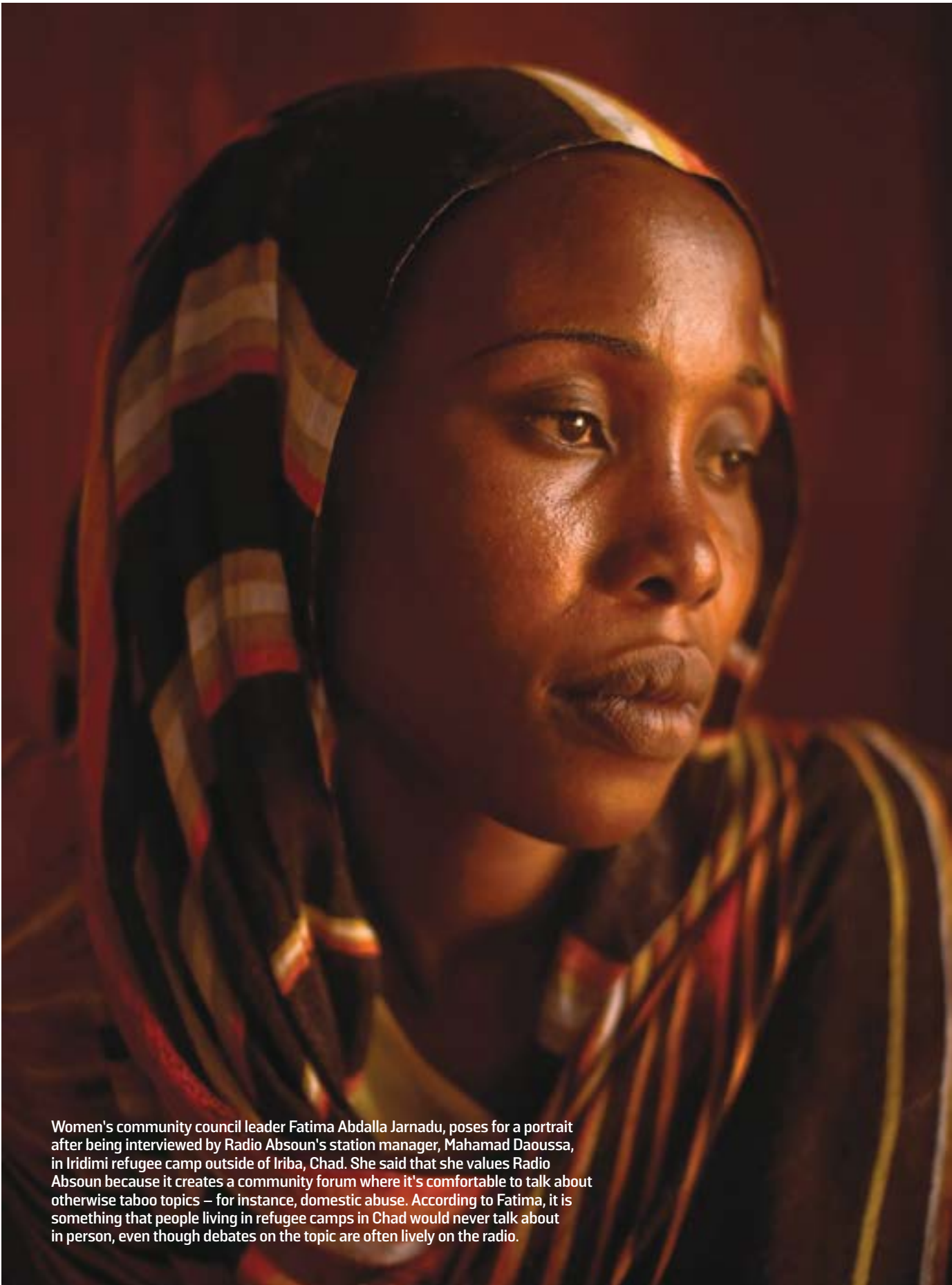
"The water had been cut here in the camp for four days because the generator was broken, and people were having to walk 10kms to find wells. It was really hard, people had to borrow from neighboring villages and it wasn't treated," he explains. "So I did a really good report criticising the fact that the water had been cut, and the next day the camp authorities came and repaired the generator."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 43





Radio Absoun's shipping container-turned-radio station in Iriba, in eastern Chad.



Women's community council leader Fatima Abdalla Jarnadu, poses for a portrait after being interviewed by Radio Absoun's station manager, Mahamad Daoussa, in Iridimi refugee camp outside of Iriba, Chad. She said that she values Radio Absoun because it creates a community forum where it's comfortable to talk about otherwise taboo topics – for instance, domestic abuse. According to Fatima, it is something that people living in refugee camps in Chad would never talk about in person, even though debates on the topic are often lively on the radio.

JOURNALIST PROFILE

Daoussa Mohammed

I am one of the oldest members of staff on the three former Internews stations.

I was the first voice in Zaghawa to be heard on the airwaves of Radio Absoun when it launched on 11th December 2005. I remember the first news program that I did in Zaghawa; we also did an open mic session about why radio was necessary in Iriba. That evening, and when I went home to my neighborhood, really people were congratulating me. It was a very proud moment for me. And I'm still here, I moved up through the ranks and now I'm the director of Radio Absoun. I've taken every step. I saw it when it was born; I've seen it grow up as if it's my own child.

But I didn't start as a journalist. After college, I started as a trainer in the commercial sector. To be honest I wasn't really interested in commerce, I'd always wanted to be a journalist – but life didn't work out that way for me and I had to do communications in management. But then suddenly one day I saw an advert from an organisation called Internews



saying they wanted to recruit journalists. I couldn't believe that someone was planning to set up a station in such a small place as Iriba – people had said in the past that we should have a station here but for some reason it never happened.

So I jumped at the chance to apply for the job; I dropped off my CV and I was very pleased to be recruited after a test. I've really learnt so much. Internews really invested in the area of training for the journalists, we did three months of training even before the radio opened! And that continued, with consultants coming to help us, all the way until Feb 2012. We are all technicians, everyone

can make reports, everyone can edit, everyone can support each other in any way in the studio when the programs are on air. Look at me, I'm editor, presenter, technician and even driver, I do everything. If I didn't I wouldn't be happy. Something tells me that if I don't do it myself it won't get done, so I get involved in everything.

If the Darfur crisis happened again, I believe our work on the radio would make it much better. If it happened again we would be able to tell people where the fighting was happening – where the bombardments were, where they must go to be safe. When they arrive as refugees someone would be ready to welcome them. When you don't have information like that it's stressful and traumatising. If such a thing should happen again we now have a way to inform people, to orientate them and tell them where to go to help each other.

It's true that the future will be really difficult, but we've made a plan. Internews has trained us in commerce and marketing, so we can do that, even if Iriba is not really known as a trading town. We will start charging the humanitarian agencies for air time to get their messages across, for targeted programs and spots. It will be hard, but I will not stop now. I've been here a very long time.

"IT WORKS BECAUSE IT'S THE ONLY METHOD OF COMMUNICATION. FOR US AS AN NGO, IF THE RADIO WASN'T HERE WE WOULD HAVE TO GO DOOR TO DOOR OR VILLAGE BY VILLAGE."

He adds that he believes the radio is an essential service. "It brings people closer together and puts them in contact with each other every day. It creates an atmosphere of harmony in the camps, and everyone is informed about what's going on. And we can hear about what's going on in the other camps – Iridimi and Am Nabak."

On our second visit to Iridimi, we saw a huge crowd gathering by the side of the road – hundreds of women with flowing scarves in every colour contrasted brightly against the dun-coloured Saharan sand. Beside them a writhing, stinking, flatulent crowd of bleating sheep and goats.

It was an animal vaccination campaign being run by the NGO Care International. This is an essential service, especially as many families lost up to 50% of their animals when

drought and hunger struck in 2009. This year's poor rainfall and harvest have made it even more important.

"Wow! Where have they all come from?" I asked Daoussa.

"We did a report on it over the weekend," he says with a twinkle in his eye. "We told people the time and place and what services would be available."

I'm slightly sceptical of his claims. But sure enough within a few minutes I've been introduced to three different women who battled their way through the crowds to describe eloquently the animal health program they heard that weekend on the radio. Seyda Mohammed says it convinced her to come. In fact the initiative is so popular, Care International's Laongma Mysuf has had to call the Chadian army to send a soldier with an AK47 to try and calm everyone down as fights break out about who turned up first. His thoughts on the value of the radio couldn't put it more simply:

"It works because it's the only method of communication. For us as an NGO, if the radio wasn't here we would have to go door to door or village by village, and we wouldn't be able to succeed with our activities. You see people have come out in huge numbers. If we go to a village tomorrow it will be the same. It's really a great success for Radio Absoun."



Workers build a shelter at the Radio Sila headquarters in Goz Beida, Chad. Since becoming independent, the journalists are responsible for fundraising and paying all of their salary, operating and maintenance costs.

CHAD IS NOT AN EASY PLACE TO BE A JOURNALIST. It's one of the poorest countries in the world with an almost completely undeveloped local media market. There are only 34 independent radio stations in the whole country, and journalists often face harassment and arrest despite the recent introduction of a nominally more liberal press law. Add in the logistical challenge of staying on air when there is no mains electricity and the price of diesel for generators is sky high, and it's clear to see that only the most determined journalists and radio stations will survive.

Sustainability

THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE for the 20 or so journalists at the three stations is certain to be money. Although most of them have firmly asserted their commitment to staying on and helping the radios to become independent, they are currently faced with the prospect of working without a proper salary until the stations can generate their own income.

Issaka Allafouza, who's vowed to stay on at Radio Voix de Ouaddai sums it up: "I've accepted to work voluntarily because I've given the last seven years of my life to this and I want to continue to inform the community. But I have a family and they have needs. I don't know if I can go on forever, but we hope that God will help us to find another funder."

Each station's business plan involves to a varying extent attracting advertising revenue, a concept which has yet to take hold in some small rural towns in the east where commerce is limited. "Internews has trained us in commerce and marketing," says Daossa Mohammed, the manager of Radio Absoun in Iriba. "But Iriba is not really known as a trading town. Not many business people come through here and people aren't used to the idea. But we'll try."

For each station, the revenue mix needs to be individually tailored. "They can try new ideas such as charging people to send their wedding and funeral dedications via text messages, hiring out office facilities such as printers and speaker

sets and even setting up an internet café," says expert sustainability consultant Michel Colin, who has provided training to the three stations over the past year. In short the journalists and managers of the three stations need to consider anything.

Abderezak Arabi, manager of Radio Sila, is factoring into his plans to generate about 600,000 CFA each month (\$1200) to run the station, even though that involves the "tightening of belts;" "We've calculated that we can charge 10,000CFA (\$20) for a 30 second spot with a humanitarian agency, and 1000CFA (\$2) for a personal message such as a death or marriage announcement." Association Al-Richate (which operates Radio Sila) also got off to a very good start, having won a grant of \$25,000 from the Julia Taft Foundation to support its work and the network of refugee correspondents.

If reliable funding streams are not established over the next few months, staff may need to consider working in other jobs during the day and then volunteering their time at the radio, and it's certain that they will need to draw on all their Internews training from the last seven years; "It's really important that all our journalists can do everything, so if someone is not there they can stand in for each other. We need everyone to be able to switch from managing, to presenting, to driving to marketing," says Abdelzerak Arabi.



INTERNEWS-TRAINED JOURNALISTS IN EASTERN CHAD ARE BEGINNING TO SELL ADVERTISING TO LOCAL RETAILERS, IN ADDITION TO SEEKING GRANT FUNDING.

A woman shops in a market in downtown Abéché, Chad. To be financially self-sustaining, Internews-trained journalists in eastern Chad are beginning to sell advertising to local retailers, in addition to seeking grant funding.



The Future

IN 2010 THE PRESIDENTS OF CHAD AND SUDAN agreed to put an end to the dangerous proxy war that had been going on between them for several years. Thousands of displaced Chadians started to return home. The fighting in Darfur seemed to die down, particularly as Bashir was presented with new challenges in South Sudan. But still the Darfur refugees are not going home – the population in the eastern Chad camps is almost exactly what it was at the beginning of the crisis eight years ago. Many people cite continuing insecurity as the main reason preventing their return. Although the story has mostly disappeared from the headlines, there are occasional reports that the Darfur conflict continues.



37-year old Achta Abakar Ibrahim, a Darfur refugee and mother of ten, holds her daughter Malia (named after Barack Obama's daughter) at their home in Djabal camp, near Goz Beida, in eastern Chad.

BUT THE STABILISATION in eastern Chad means that funding for Darfur projects is drying up, as donor's attention is diverted to new crises breaking out across the world. Many of the NGOs pulled out of the east of Chad when the UN Mission Minurcat was dramatically forced to leave in early 2010 when President Deby refused to renew the mandate.

I was struck by the difference in Abeche, compared with my last visit in 2009 when the roads were teeming with gleaming white UN vehicles and foreign soldiers, and every pizza joint in town was full to breaking. Since then tens of international NGOs have left, with the UN's co-ordination office OCHA saying six more did so in the 12 months prior to July 2012. Internews is one of them. And though they have been able to garner funding for an extra few years beyond that of many other international agencies, their major donors – UNHCR and the US State Department Bureau of Population Refugees and Migration (BPRM) – both no

IN A COUNTRY WHERE MOST PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS GET PAID PEANUTS (THE AVERAGE SALARY IS ABOUT \$150 A MONTH), AND IT TOOK UNTIL THE YEAR 2000 BEFORE THE FIRST PRIVATE RADIO STATION DJA FM WAS GRANTED A LICENCE, THE INTERNEWS PROFESSIONALISM, SKILLS SET AND RANGE OF PROGRAMMING IS SECOND TO NONE.



longer have the funding to continue supporting the project. Abeche seems to quietly be sinking back into the desert, albeit with the notable addition of paved roads and solar powered street lights.

So what has Internews achieved?

First the fact that a network of some 30 professional Chadian journalists and 12 refugee correspondents exists, all of whom have benefited from extensive journalism training and mentoring over a prolonged period of time. It is significant that these journalists all have fully functioning equipment, from quality microphones and marantzes to studio desks, cars and generators.

In a country where most professional journalists get paid peanuts (the average salary is about \$150 a month), and it took until the year 2000 before the first private radio station Dja FM was granted a licence, the Internews professionalism, skills set and range of programming is second to none. Even today there are only around 40 independent radio stations in the whole country (and only one in the vast BET (Borkou-Ennedi-Tibesti) area that makes up one



Teenage boys listen to Radio Sila in Djabal refugee camp, near Goz Beida.

third of Chad's territory in the north), and most other radio journalists at private stations have to hold down several jobs in order to indulge their broadcasting passion. Often the journalists are the technicians, presenters, managers and fund-raisers; often they simply cannot afford to go out on reporting trips. Most radios in Chad only broadcast for a



few hours a day and some don't even broadcast every day or even at regular times.

Equally important is the power of giving a voice to people who previously had no means of letting those in authority know how they felt; Abdullah from Gaga camp's comments in 2009 sum this up perfectly: "Our lives as refugees are filled with difficulties. We don't often have the means to

voice our concerns and seek solutions with the camp authorities. Through the radio I can make my voice heard."

Former project director Ian Noble agrees: "Media elsewhere in Chad – as in many other countries – are dominated by what the minister, the aid agency official, the endless queue of workshop facilitators, etc., have to say and neglect the people most concerned."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 54



Internews-trained journalist Zakaria Barout (right) interviews a teacher in Touloum refugee camp near Iriba in Eastern Chad.



BUT ASSESSING THE LEGACY IS COMPLEX. By its very nature it's hard to point to a concrete change that can solely be attributed to the many thousands of radio hours that have been produced over the last seven years. What can be said for certain is that amongst the many people we met in the east of Chad, there was a palpable sense of the radios already having become an integral part of the communities in which they operate. One of the most important issues we touched upon was that of trust, and the fact that most listeners believe that the journalists have done thorough research and checking before broadcasting things, and that sets them apart from the rumor mill. We found many comments such as "Journalists go and look with their own eyes and they check the facts, and then they tell us," or "We know that the information we hear has come from a good source."

ULTIMATELY FOR ANY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT TO SURVIVE LOSING ITS MAIN SOURCE OF FUNDING, THE INSTITUTION NEEDS TO BE OWNED AND VALUED BY THE COMMUNITY – NOT JUST IN TERMS OF ENJOYING IT, BUT IN ACTIVELY TAKING STEPS TO HELP IT SURVIVE.

For Noble, it's this local contact that can be seen as one of the greatest achievements. "In a nutshell, what Internews did best was to give a voice to ordinary people, by getting out into the streets with a microphone and recorder and giving them a chance to have their say about issues directly affecting their lives."

Internews would point to the fact that their support of the radio stations over a seven-year period is unusual amongst humanitarian interventions in eastern Chad, where some NGOs barely last a few years. The team in Washington believes that despite concerns that the transition phase to get the radios ready to stand on their own two feet was too short, they have achieved an organised hand-over and retreat.

Income generation training was carried out by Michel Colin, an independent consultant, in 2011 and 2012. "We focused on organising staff – even if it requires reducing the number of journalists to engage sales people," says Colin. "The most obvious sources are the revenues from advertising, public announcement, sponsorship, contests, texting and co-production, but we also looked at office services such as copying, printing and internet." The journalists were also trained on management, contract negotiations and book-keeping; before Internews left, they helped purchase land for Radio Sila and Radio Voix de Ouaddai, removing the need to pay monthly rent.

Abdezerak Arabi, station manager Radio Sila, is not sure that this will work, but he is 100 percent willing to try. "What will we say to people? Give us some money because our radio doesn't work anymore? No we can't say that. We need to prove to them that we can help them and change their life – that we can offer them something, that we can educate them and change their behaviour. That way they might be persuaded to help us in the future."

"Although it is inevitable that funding for every project eventually comes to an end, it has been heartbreaking to pull out of Chad," says Deborah Ensor, Internews' vice president for the Africa region. "The international interest is gone, the funding is drying up, but the people are still there. The need for information is still there."

Ensor is convinced the stations will survive, though acknowledges that they may look very different then they did in the heyday of big donor money. "I think we have done the best we could to help set them up for the future – training, equipment, land, buildings, emotional support. There is nothing that makes me more proud than the work that these journalists have accomplished in Chad – and the work I know they will continue to do."

Ultimately for any development project to survive losing its main source of funding, the institution needs to be owned and valued by the community – not just in terms of enjoying it, but in actively taking steps to help it survive. These are issues that affect media outlets the world over as readers and listeners become less and less willing to pay for their news.

While we found many people expressing support and appreciation for the radio, we found few concrete offers of help. What happens when the generator breaks down, who pays the medical bills of the journalists if one of their children falls sick?

One idea is to bring the community into the management and running of the station, so the population comes to understand how much work goes into keeping it on air. To that end Radio Sila journalist Madjihinguem Nguinabe hit the nail on the head when he said that one of the most valuable things the radio can do is to train young people to be volunteers.

The example of 18-year-old Rahma Mohamed Ibed still stands out.

On the morning we were due to leave Goz Beida, I nipped in to say bye to the staff, and found Rahma deep in discussion with station manager Abdezerak Arabi. It was only yesterday that we'd left him chatting to Madji in Djabal camp.

Rahma's smile is as broad as can be as he shakes hands with Abdezerak. He says hi to me and then nervously disappears through the huge metal gate and marches across the scrubland and weeds outside, his yellow flip-flops clacking against his heels, incongruous against his best smart suit.

"Hang on, where's he going? What happened?!" I ask Madji.

"Oh he's coming back on Sunday to start a youth discussion program," he replies casually.

"Really? You organised all that since yesterday?" I can scarcely believe him.

"I told you," says Madji. "We can do anything." 🍌



Adam Ali, a shepherd in Abougoudam, a village of Chadian Arab Nomads, listens to the radio as he tends to his herd in surrounding fields.



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Local voices. Global change.

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ABOUT INTERNEWS

INTERNEWS is an international non-profit media development organization whose mission is to empower local media worldwide to give people the news and information they need, the ability to connect and the means to make their voices heard.

Formed in 1982, Internews has worked in more than 75 countries, and currently has offices in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Latin America and North America.

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COVER PHOTO: Radio Sila's camp correspondent, Usna Omar Arabi, conducts an interview in Djabal refugee camp.

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