An Evaluation of 'Civilia'

Working with Local Media to Tackle
Hate Speech in Côte d'Ivoire.

Prepared by: Dr Adou Djané Dit Fatogoma

25 X25

Internews

25x25 Series

Internews is an international non-profit that supports independent media in 100 countries – from radio stations in refugee camps, to hyper-local news outlets, to filmmakers and technologists. We train journalists and digital rights activists, tackle disinformation, and offer business expertise to help media outlets thrive financially. For nearly 40 years, we have helped partners reach millions of people with trustworthy information that saves lives, improves livelihoods, and holds institutions accountable.

We commissioned this report as part of the 25 x 25 initiative, our strategic commitment to increase robust evaluation of our work by delivering 25 research studies by 2025. We have made this commitment because we want to know which of our approaches are most effective in order to bring them to scale, to strengthen our understanding of the impact for communities when their information environments improve over time, to make our contribution to the global evidence base, and to hold ourselves accountable to the people we serve.

We will do this work alongside external research partners who share our vision to realize the potential of a digitally connected world: a world in which evidence-based information advances human progress, enables broad opportunity and accountability, and fuels vibrant civic debate. We know we will only achieve this through a deep understanding of the contexts we work in, and a constant drive to learn and improve.

November 2022

Acknowledgements

Cover: Edinah and Nikoleta Nosovska for Fine Acts

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

CSO   Civil society organization

NDI   National Democratic Institute

NDP   National Development Plan

POECI   The Platform for Election Observation in Côte d'Ivoire

PSCPD   Civil Society Platform for Peace and Democracy

PTI   Political Transition and Inclusion Program (Côte d'Ivoire)

USAID   United States Agency for International Development

Executive Summary

> *"[In Civilia programming,] we are asked to talk to people about violent extremism and how to ensure that people are not attracted to it."*
>
> — Interview, religious leader

Figure 1. Sample post and engagement from the Police Secours/Civilia partnership[1]

About this Report

Côte d'Ivoire is affected by electoral violence and other forms of conflict, and low levels of political participation. It also has few impartial media outlets able to support social cohesion and positive political engagement. Since 2010, increased attacks on marginalized groups in the country have reflected a growth in online hate speech.

This report summarizes an evaluation of the Civilia media project in Côte d'Ivoire which was carried out in 2021. It aims to inform future media initiatives to promote political participation and social cohesion in Côte d'Ivoire, Western Africa, and elsewhere.

The Civilia Project

Delivered by Internews in 2018–2021, Civilia was the media component of the Political Transition and Inclusion program (PTI) in Côte d'Ivoire.

PTI was funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and implemented by a consortium of international and national NGOs led by the National Democratic Institute. It aimed to improve governance, and increase citizens' participation in political dialogue, with a focus on reducing hate speech and political violence.

To support this, Civilia specifically targeted youth and women in areas with heightened risks of political and inter-community violence.

Primary project activities included:

- Building the capacity of Ivorian media practitioners to report on issues in conflict-sensitive ways

- Enabling marginalized voices to be amplified

- Raising awareness of hate speech and its consequences

- Rebuilding constructive dialogue between citizens and government

Working with Ivorian media professionals, Internews produced and facilitated radio and social media content to cover, and constructively debate, issues of concern to Ivorian citizens. Through a network of partner radio stations, Civilia content was broadcast in 10 local languages across the country.

This content included:

- One-hour radio programs featuring reports, interviews, debates and call-in features.

- Carton Rouge (Red Card), a weekly 10-minute radio and online video column to discuss recent types of hate speech, immediately followed by local debates on the issue.

- Short videos published on the Civilia Facebook page and the social media pages of the African Media Institute and Police Secours.

Methodology

The evaluation was conducted by a team led by the sociologist Dr Adou Djané Dit Fatogoma, just before the Civilia project ended. To assess the impact and effectiveness of the project, particularly the Civilia Facebook page, it combined qualitative and quantitative data collection, and a document review.

The research tools were:

- 12 focus group discussions with Civilia audience members from across Côte d'Ivoire

- 35 in-depth interviews, conducted in person, via telephone or online with representatives from project partner organizations, or other bodies with similar objectives

- a survey completed by 128 Civilia audience members

- data analysis of the Civilia Facebook page

For practical reasons, sampling for the focus group and survey respondents was limited to members of partner radio stations' listening groups and their networks. This resulted in a sample that was disproportionately familiar with Civilia content.

Key Findings

Reach

Civilia achieved significant audience reach by partnering with more than 20 radio stations across Côte d'Ivoire, and via Facebook, the most widely used social media platform. Partnerships with these radio stations and other social media actors led to further promotion of Civilia content. Overall, Civilia content reached 5.3 million people through social media. This resulted in very high awareness levels — 86 percent of survey respondents were aware of Civilia.

Analysis of the Civilia Facebook page shows that page impressions grew significantly and "likes" more than trebled over the course of the project. Most of this page's active followers were aged 25–35, reflecting a key target audience. However, the page attracted fewer women than men across almost all age groups.

The research presents a mixed picture on the accessibility of Civilia content. Although 38 percent of survey respondents reported struggling to follow Civilia content, because it included formal language or because of the broadcast time (findings echoed by the qualitative research), some qualitative research participants praised the language used and the morning primetime broadcast slot. In terms of language, the original Civilia presenter, a young woman who represented the target audience, used more accessible language than the avatar that replaced her.

Perceptions

Survey respondents primarily accessed Civilia content because it reflected local communities' needs and educated people about different aspects of society, rather than its role in raising awareness about hate speech.

More survey respondents (41 percent) recognized that Civilia covered hate speech than any other topic but far fewer cited the participation of youth and women in political life as Civilia topics. This matches survey respondents' views on Civilia's positive contributions — 42 percent mentioned combating hate speech yet only 5 percent mentioned increasing participation in politics.

Survey respondents reported high-to-very-high levels of satisfaction with Civilia content. The qualitative research suggested several reasons for this, including the choice of presenter, the time of broadcast, and the content's language and tone.

Civilia was also highly valued by project partners. In-depth interviewees from these organizations particularly cited Civilia's coverage of their work, which brought them greater community engagement, but also its capacity building support.

Overall Impact

The Civilia project contributed to achieving PTI program objectives. The project raised public awareness of hate speech and its impact. Project partners learned about the challenges around hate speech, ways to address them, and technical skills. Civilia also contributed to strengthening peace and social cohesion in the country by increasing public awareness about a range of social cohesion and peacebuilding issues.

Producing so much content tailored to local concerns was only possible because of the many partnerships that underpinned the project. Partner radio stations ended up producing or rebroadcasting more Civilia content than stipulated in their contract, reflecting how highly they valued it.

Impact on Target Audiences

Civilia content encouraged local and national debate on the topic of hate speech. There are indications that more Ivorian journalists are now covering the issue, and more citizens are reporting hateful content on Facebook.

A majority (67 percent) of Civilia's online and radio audiences recommended its content to friends and relatives, suggesting they valued it. Importantly, Civilia content prompted many survey respondents to act. Half (49 percent) of these respondents had increased their friends' and relatives' awareness of hate speech, and 13 percent had actively combated hate speech.

The COVID-19 pandemic began part-way through the Civilia project. The project team was agile in raising awareness about the virus, and covering issues including mask wearing and accessing vaccinations. The presenter role modeled compliance with COVID-19 restrictions, such as working from home. Three-quarters (76 percent) of Civilia audience members followed its COVID-19 content. The qualitative research suggests that this had a positive impact on people's understanding, attitudes and behavior.

Recommendations

The evaluation recommended continuing, replicating and ideally broadening the Civilia model to address the challenges faced by Côte d'Ivoire and the wider West African region in relation to conflict, hate speech and violent extremism.

Its specific, actionable recommendations are:

1. Adjust topics to address the most relevant local issues.

2. Cover locations affected by the 2020 electoral crisis, more locations in the north and west affected by violent extremism, and more Abidjan municipalities.

3. Change broadcast times to increase radio and social media audiences.

4. Produce more visual content and shorter videos, and host competitions and social media discussions to increase audience engagement.

5. Broaden the social media platforms used, to include Instagram, YouTube and a vlog.

6. Strengthen the presenter's and correspondents' communication skills.

7. Improve coordination and timely communication with broadcast partners.

8. Scale up publicity around this kind of initiative.

9. Use more effective content analysis tools.

> *"I used to share what I saw on social media without checking it. But when I started following the Civilia page, … I realized … you need to take time to really understand information before sharing it … That changed how I do things on social media … I realized that … we need to watch out for hate speech … Whenever I see a topic discussed, I take the time to check it and find out more."*
>
> — Interview, Civilia online consumer

Introduction

> *"Our country is still rebuilding …Civilia is here to support …social stability. Through campaigns broadcast on the radio, it raises awareness among the population about practising values such as citizenship."*
>
> — Listener focus group, Radio-Arc en Ciel, Abobo

The Aim of this Evaluation Summary

This document summarizes the final evaluation of the Civilia project in Côte d'Ivoire. Delivered by Internews in 2018–2021, Civilia (see page x) was the media component of the Political Transition and Inclusion program (PTI) in the country (see page x). The Civilia evaluation was conducted in 2021, towards the end of the project.

By publicizing findings and recommendations arising from the Civilia project in an accessible way, this summary aims to inspire and inform future media initiatives to promote citizens' political participation and constructive dialogue. In that way, it may ultimately help to underpin peacebuilding — in Côte d'Ivoire, Western Africa, and elsewhere.

Definitions used in this Document

Disinformation: *"content that is intentionally false and designed to cause harm. It is motivated by three factors: to make money; to have political influence, either foreign or domestic; or to cause trouble for the sake of it."*[2]

Hate speech: *"any kind of communication... that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group on the basis of who they are, in other words, based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, colour, descent, gender or other identity factor."*[3]

Misinformation: *"Misinformation also describes false content, but the person sharing doesn't realize that it is false or misleading."*[4]

The Ivorian Context

Conflict Drivers

Côte d'Ivoire has experienced significant tensions since around 1990, relating to issues including: political succession; migration; land management disputes; poor government services; religious, ethnic and regional rivalries; limited economic opportunities; high youth unemployment; and exclusion from political decision-making. The country underwent a military coup in 1993, and a civil war from 2002–2006. The UN had a peacekeeping force in the country until 2017.

As in other parts of the world, violence attributed to online hate speech has grown in Côte d'Ivoire since 2010. Increased attacks on members of various ethnic, racial, religious and gender-based groups have reflected a growth in hate speech about these groups. In 2010/11, post-election violence caused more than 3,000 deaths in the country, displaced thousands more people, and left deep societal scars.

In this context, there were concerns that the 2020 presidential election might trigger further violence, and fears about risks of violent extremism in northern Côte d'Ivoire linked to wider tensions in the Sahel.

Political Participation

Many Ivorians have long been frustrated by the poor quality of government services, and distrust in government has been a factor in the country's conflict and insecurity. Citizens interviewed by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) perceived corruption at all government levels, and widespread partisan political patronage.[5]

Unsurprisingly, this distrust means that many citizens — particularly youth and women — do not participate in elections.[6] For example, only 1 in 6 youth voted in previous elections.[7] This has implications beyond people not making their voices heard — the United Nations Development Programme has linked "disaffection with government" with Africans' involvement in extremism.[8] Similarly, USAID has identified that a sense of discrimination or injustice can drive young people to violent extremism, while elections and other political processes provide opportunities to tackle drivers of conflict and extremism.[9]

Recent Ivorian governments have increasingly focused on these problems. The country's 2016–2020 National Development Plan (NDP)[10] focused on strengthening democracy and

rights to support peace, and its 2021–2025[11] NDP focuses on strengthening peace-building and governance.

The Media Landscape

The Ivorian media has also contributed to conflict and political disengagement but has potential to help overcome these challenges. An Afrobarometer survey showed that 66.9 percent of Ivorians want the media to report on government performance, but a similar percentage acknowledges the lack of an independent news media capable of doing that.[12]

Côte d'Ivoire's national radio and television are predominantly pro-government, and many of its newspapers are partisan. Community radio stations are barred from 'political' pro-gramming, which limits their coverage of public affairs. And journalists are poorly paid, so many have second jobs. As a result, the media has largely failed to tackle mistrust between different demographic groups.

While GeoPoll research has found that television is the country's most accessed media channel, 84 percent of young people (aged 15–24) listen to the radio each day.[13] Ivorians increasingly rely on mobile technologies and social media to obtain news and discuss current affairs. Facebook is the most widely used social network by young people in Côte d'Ivoire, with 5.8 million users in June 2021. Yet without objective and trusted media sources, social media users are vulnerable to encountering, and even perpetuating, disinformation, misinformation and hate speech.

The Political Transition and Inclusion in Côte d'Ivoire Program

Part of the wider Political Inclusion and Accountability project, the Political Transition and Inclusion in Côte d'Ivoire (PTI) program[14] ran from August 2018 until the end of 2021. It sought to improve governance, and increase participation in the country's political dialogue, with a specific focus on reducing hate speech and associated political violence.

The program was funded by USAID and implemented by a consortium of international and national NGOs, led by the National Democratic Institute (NDI):

- Internews led the program's cross-cutting media interventions

- CARE focused on creating innovative economic opportunities

- The Platform for Election Observation in Côte d'Ivoire (POECI)

- The cross-sectoral coalition Coordinating Committee for Women's Political Participation

- Rural Actions of Korhogo led program activities in Savanes

- The Organization for the Development of Women's Activities led program activities in Montagnes

- The Civil Society Platform for Peace and Democracy (PSCPD) led program activities in Valleé du Bandama

- The West African Civil Society Forum led program activities in Abidjan

The program engaged diverse local actors, including community leaders, traditional chiefs, private sector entrepreneurs, religious leaders, and youth members of demobilized armed groups. It also worked with women and youth in marginalized areas.

Internews' Role in the PTI Program

Under the PTI program, Internews provided a platform for marginalized voices, particularly youth and women working with local journalists across the country to produce inclusive radio and social media content, covering citizen priorities and governance issues, to support mutual understanding and reduce hate speech.

Internews has been active in Côte d'Ivoire since 2011, strengthening the capacity of community radio stations in western Côte d'Ivoire, enhancing the capacity of Ivorian civil society to advocate for human rights, and providing a neutral space in Abidjan for civil society organizations (CSOs) and media to interact.

The Civilia Project

Civilia was a pilot media and governance project in Côte d'Ivoire, which was implemented by Internews from August 2018 to December 2021.

The project aimed to support the overall PTI program goal of improving governance in Côte d'Ivoire and increasing citizens' participation in political dialogue. Specifically, Civilia aimed

to increase participation in political processes among youth and women, to strengthen community cohesion in areas with heightened risks of conflict.

The project took several approaches to meet its objectives:

- Monitoring levels of hate speech on Ivorian social media channels to inform programming

- Building the capacity of local media to report on issues in conflict-sensitive ways

- Enabling moderate and marginalized voices to be heard and listened to via the media

- Informing Ivorian citizens of the nature and consequences of hate speech

- Strengthening critical thinking and media literacy among citizens

- Rebuilding links and dialogue between citizens and their government

Based on weekly tracking of online hate speech, and working closely with Ivorian media professionals, Internews designed radio and online social media content to promote constructive discussion about sensitive issues of concern to Ivorian citizens.

Most of this content was presented by Civilia,[15] a reporter who investigated the concerns of women and youth across Côte d'Ivoire and raised them with authorities to improve dialogue and understanding between citizens and government representatives. Civilia also reported on CSOs' solutions to citizens' concerns and raised awareness of hate speech. Working with a network of correspondents and partner radio stations, Civilia content was broadcast in 10 local languages to reach rural and marginalized areas across the country.

The Civilia project's media outputs included:

- One-hour radio programs including reporting on topics of concern, related interviews with citizens and political leaders, topical debates and call-in features, that were broadcast across the country by partner radio stations.

- Carton Rouge (Red Card), a weekly 10-minute radio and online video column to discuss recently observed types of hate speech. This was broadcast on Radio de la Paix, Radio Al Bayane (the stations with the widest reach in Côte d'Ivoire), a network of around 20 partner radio stations across the country and via Facebook videos. Partner radio stations invited local people to listen to each episode and immediately held an on-air debate to link the show with recently encountered hate speech.

- Short videos published on the Civilia Facebook page and the social media pages of the African Media Institute and Police Secours.

The project covered critical areas for political and inter-community violence. In Abidjan, it focused on the municipalities of Yopougon, Koumassi, Anyama and Abobo. It also covered Bouaké in central Côte d'Ivoire, Korhogo in the north, and Man, Duékoué and Blolequin in the west (see *Figure 2*).

Figure 2. PTI and Civilia implementation areas
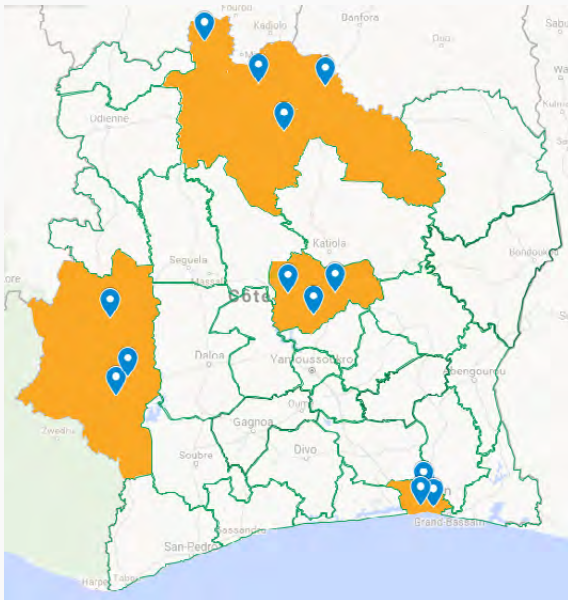
Orange: PTI program regions
Blue: Civilia project locations

Methodology

Research Questions and Design

The Civilia evaluation was conducted by the sociologist Dr Adou Djané Dit Fatogoma and his team. The research questions that guided the Civilia evaluation are listed in Annex 1.

Broadly, they cover four main themes in relation to the project, particularly the content published on the Civilia Facebook page:

- Its impact and added value, including which content was most effective

- Its contributions to project objectives

- Perceptions of, and reactions to, Civilia content among target audiences, partner radio stations and partner NGOs

- How to increase the impact of similar projects in future

The Civilia evaluation took place in late 2021 while the project was still operational. It used a mixed-method approach that combined qualitative and quantitative data collection, supplemented by a document review. As the evaluation took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, the research team followed local guidance and restrictions to minimize the risk of transmitting the virus.

The qualitative research included focus group discussions with Civilia audience members, and key informant interviews with government, project partner or representatives of other organizations working to improve governance, political participation and tackle hate speech in Côte d'Ivoire.

The quantitative research comprised a survey questionnaire among Civilia audience members, supplemented by data analysis of the Civilia Facebook page.

All qualitative and quantitative responses in this evaluation summary have been anonymized.

Research Sample, Data Collection and Analysis

Qualitative Data

The **document review** covered Civilia project documents, implementation reports, and reports on the Civilia Facebook page content, as well as observations from site visits.

The evaluation team conduced 35 **in-depth interviews** with representatives of the Civilia project team, members of target demographic groups (notably youth and women), officials and others involved in increasing political engagement or tackling extremism in Côte d'Ivoire.

Most interviews were conducted in person at partner radio stations' premises, but some were conducted via telephone or online. All interviews were guided via a questionnaire, using the Kobo ToolBox application.

Each interviewee provided their informed consent, based on understanding the purpose of evaluation, the reasons for choosing them as an interviewee, how their contributions would be used, and their freedom to stop participating at any point.

The evaluation team held 12 **focus group discussions**, with a total of 103 participants across all project intervention areas (see *Table 1*).

All qualitative data was analyzed using MAXQDA 2018 software.

Quantitative Data

The evaluation's quantitative element included 128 Civilia radio listeners and internet users completing a **survey questionnaire** (see *Table 1*). Participating audience members from different Civilia intervention areas were targeted using snowball sampling, based on lists of listening group members provided by partner radio stations.

This was supplemented by **data analysis of the Civilia Facebook page**, using Facebook audience insights and Facebook Analytics for Civilia pages.

Table 1. Distribution of survey respondents and focus group participants by locality

Locality	Number of survey respondents	Proportion of quantitative respondents	Number of focus group discussions	Number of focus group participants	Proportion of qualitative respondents
Abidjan	30	24%	3	37	36%
Blolequin	6	5%	1	6	5.5%
Bouaké	26	20%	2	16	16%
Duékoué	8	7%	1	7	7%
Guiglo	7	5%	–	–	–
Korhogo	17	13%	3	23	22%
Man	11	9%	1	8	8%
Ouangolodougou	7	5%	–	–	–
Sakassou	7	5%	1	6	5.5%
Tengrela	9	7%	–	–	–
Total	128	100%	12	103	100%

Research Limitations

Ideally, sampling for the quantitative (focus group) and quantitative (survey) research tools would have involved a random selection from the population to provide a more representative understanding of Civilia's audience members and their perspectives. However, this risked a high probability of selecting respondents who were unaware of the initiative.

The project partner radio stations did not have a database of listeners or audience measurement tools beyond their listening groups, which limited the choice of respondents to members of these groups and their networks. This resulted in a sample that was disproportionately familiar with Civilia content.

Findings

> *"We're telling listeners and internet users — 'Watch out this week, there's a rise in hate speech. Careful, this week on social media you've been more offensive. You've used a lot of sexist language. You've made a lot of threats …' Carton Rouge is … challenging each person about the problems, … the danger, created each time we allow hate speech to slip through."*
> — Interview, representative from organization involved in hate speech monitoring

Figure 3. Example Civilia content shared on Radio de la Paix's Facebook page[16]

Civilia's Reach

The Civilia project produced and disseminated 527 pieces of media content, including radio segments, Facebook live debates and press releases. Civilia achieved significant audience reach in Côte d'Ivoire by partnering with Radio de la Paix (which covers 24 cities), Radio Al Bayane (the most listened to radio station) and around 20 local radio stations across the country, and via Facebook, the most widely used social media platform.

> *"Raising awareness about hate speech — that's what we're there to talk about. Civilia does several features — … the call to action with statistics, … awareness visuals… shared on the different platforms. We reach a million users on our different platforms — Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, the website, … Through those channels, … we spread these different messages."*
> — Interview, Police Secours representative

Project partnerships with other social media actors, notably Police Secours, the African Media Institute and the influencer Israël Yoroba, led to wider promotion of Civilia content, in addition to partner radio stations sharing content via their own social media platforms. Overall, Civilia content reached 5.3 million people through social media.

This resulted in very high awareness levels — 86 percent of survey respondents said they were aware of Civilia. Most (some 68 percent) knew that Civilia was a producer of radio shows, whereas only 10 percent knew it was both a Facebook page and a radio show producer.

Figure 4. Civilia Facebook page traffic and engagement, 2019–2021
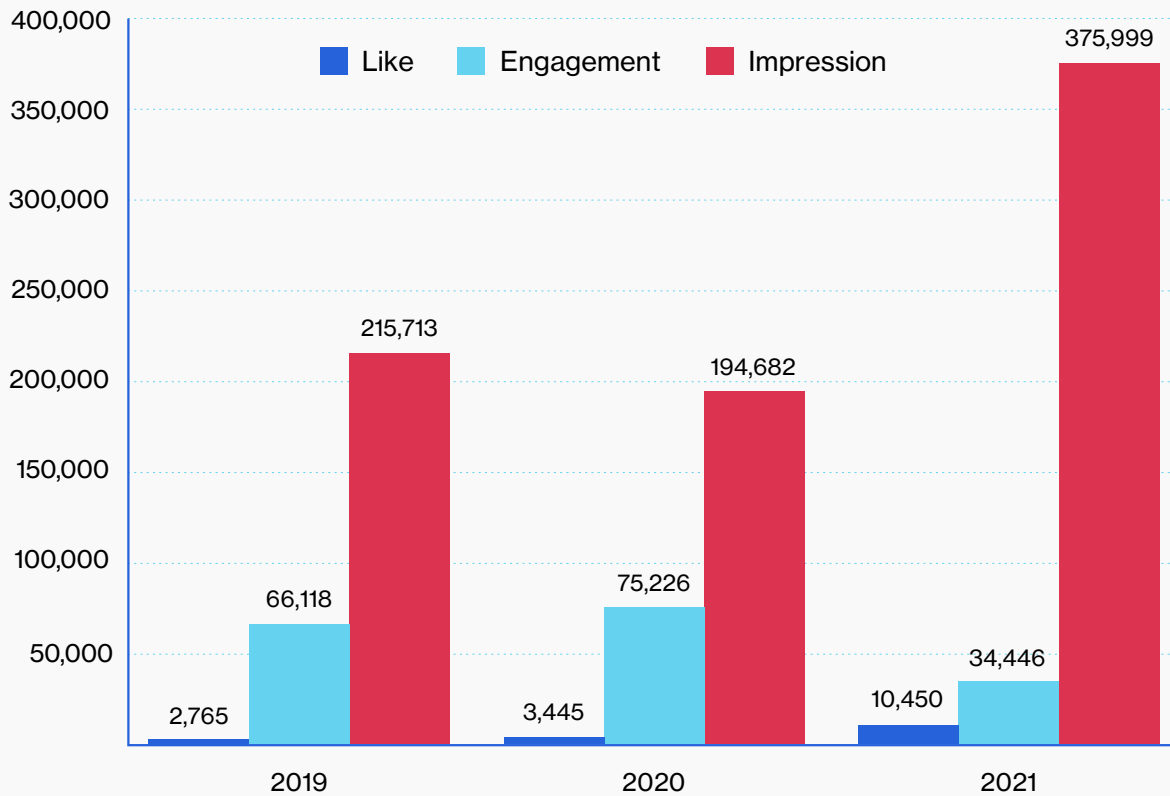
Likes: People who "liked" the page

Engagement: Reactions, comments, shares, clicks and messages from people who "liked" the page

Impressions: The number of post views on the page, regardless of any interactions

By the end of 2021, Civilia's Facebook page had more than 10,000 followers. Page analysis (see *Figure 4*) shows that page visits grew significantly and "likes" more than trebled over the course of the project, but other forms of engagement increased then dropped.

Figure 5. Civilia Facebook page follower demographics
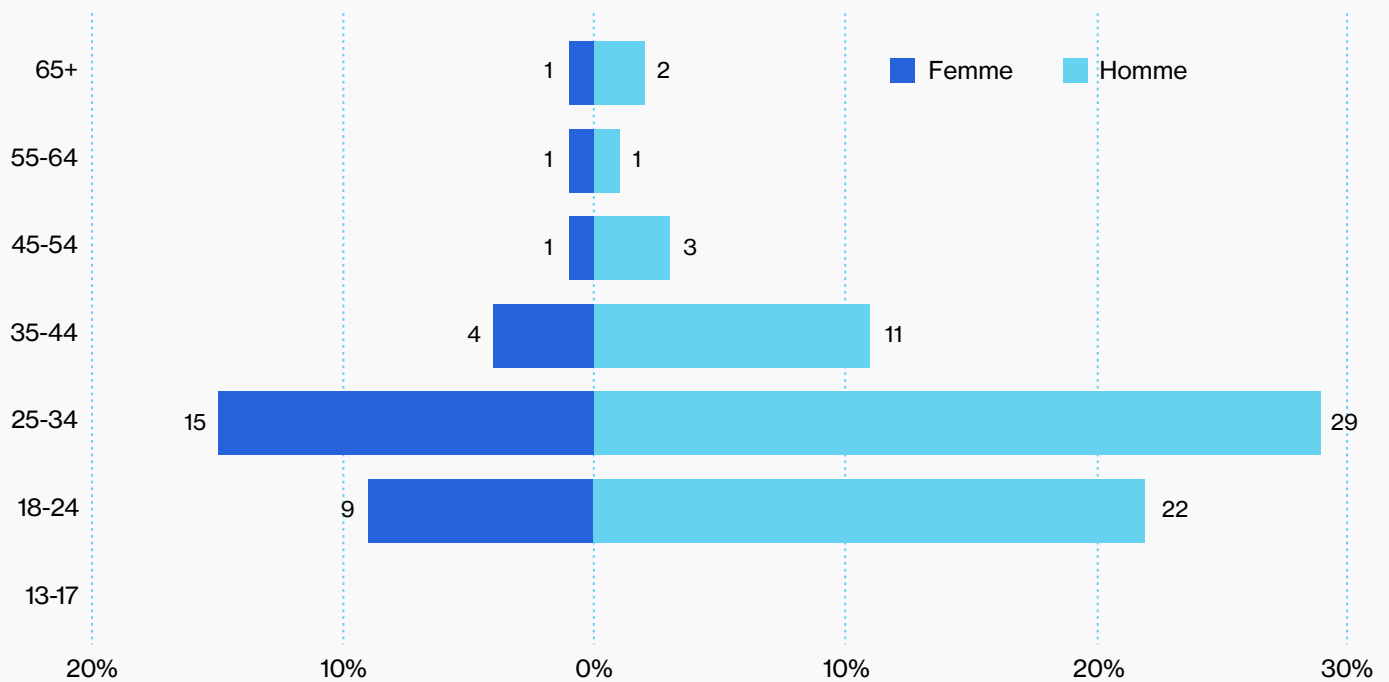
Importantly, Facebook page data (see *Figure 5*) shows that most of its active followers were young people (aged 25–35), reflecting a key target audience. However, women formed the minority of followers among almost all age groups, suggesting that this target audience was reached less successfully.

Some 33 percent of the survey respondents had encountered problems following Civilia content, because it included formal language or because of the broadcast time (see *Figure 6*). However, only 7 percent reported Civilia having unclear messaging, and qualitative research highlighted both positives and negatives relating to the time of broadcast.

Figure 6. Challenges with Civilia content encountered by survey respondents
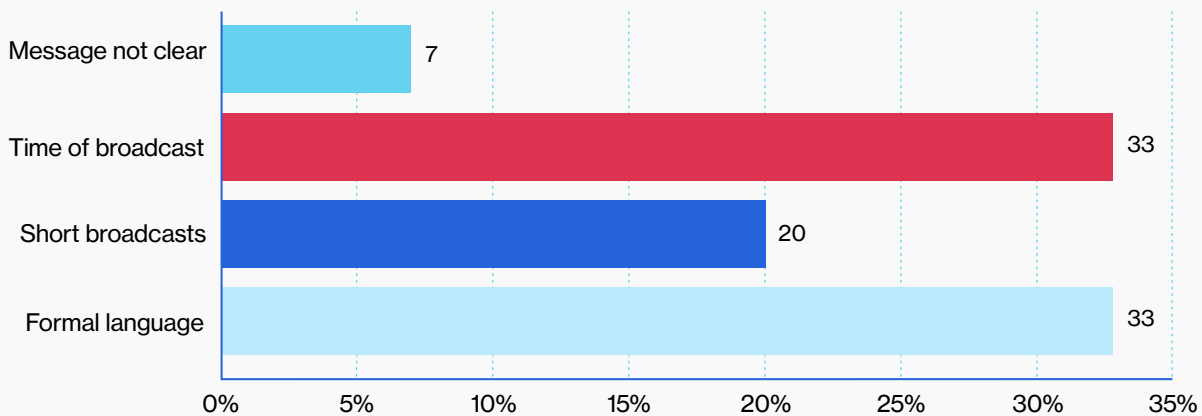
> *"The program is broadcast [on Radio de la Paix] at 7.40am, … a time where there's a big audience … because … at 7am, there's the news bulletin and again at 8am … Listeners are already tuned in …so the timing is really good … Civilia comes on and she's an expert … who speaks on behalf of civil society."*
> — Interview, Radio de la Paix representative

> *"There is a problem with the time of day … — 7.40am — … the guest needs to be there very early and … not all the guests can be there to record live … Once or twice, … presenters have arrived too late to be ready for the show."*
> — Interview, Radio de la Paix representative

Target Audience and Stakeholder Perceptions

Target Audiences' Perceptions of Civilia

Several factors motivated survey respondents to keep accessing Civilia radio or online content (see *Figure 7*). Primary motivators included perceptions that this content reflected the needs of local communities (cited by 34 percent) and that it educated people about different aspects of society (22 percent) — both were central to Civilia's objectives. Slightly fewer respondents cited Civilia's role in raising awareness about hate speech, and the content's reliability and credibility.

Figure 7. Survey respondents' motivation for following Civilia content

Category	Percent
Education about different aspects of society	22
Awareness about hate speech	19
Reliability and credibility of content	16
Partner structure in Civilia	1
Quality of productions	26
Mainstreaming the needs of communities	34
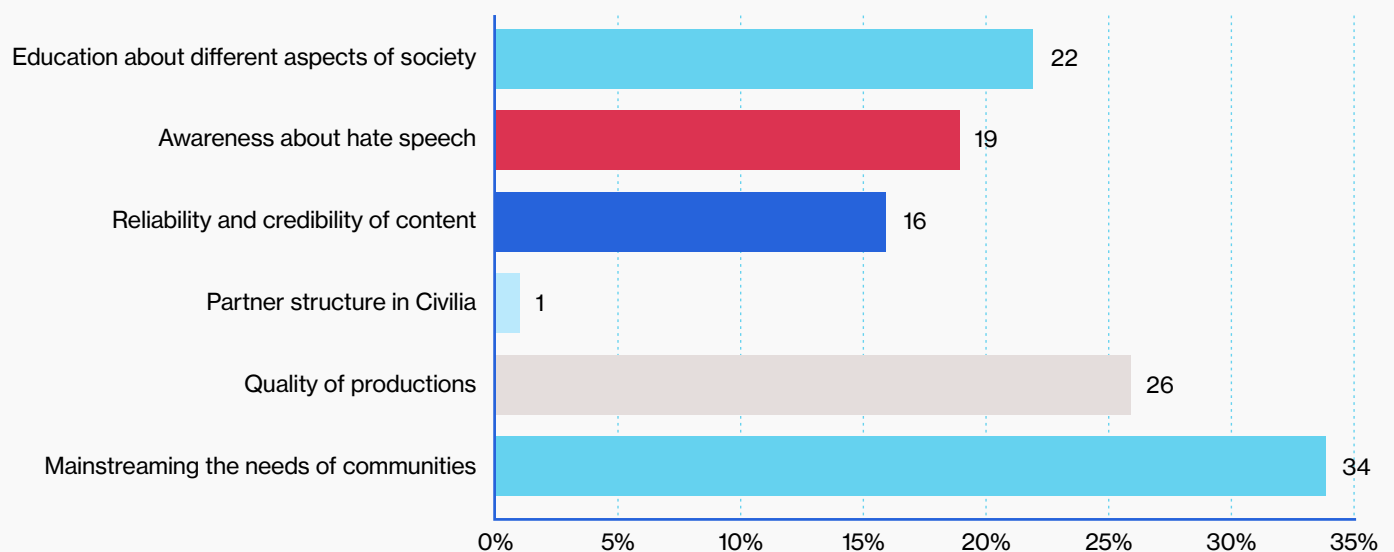
Conversely, more survey respondents (41 percent) recognized that Civilia covered hate

speech than any other topic. The participation of youth and women in political life were cited as Civilia topics by far fewer respondents (8 and 5 percent, respectively — see *Figure 8*). These findings generally reflect respondents' views on the positive contributions made by Civilia (see *Figure 9*). The most cited contribution was combating hate speech (mentioned by 41 percent), and the least cited was increasing participation in political life (5 percent).

Figure 8. Topics addressed by Civilia according to survey respondents
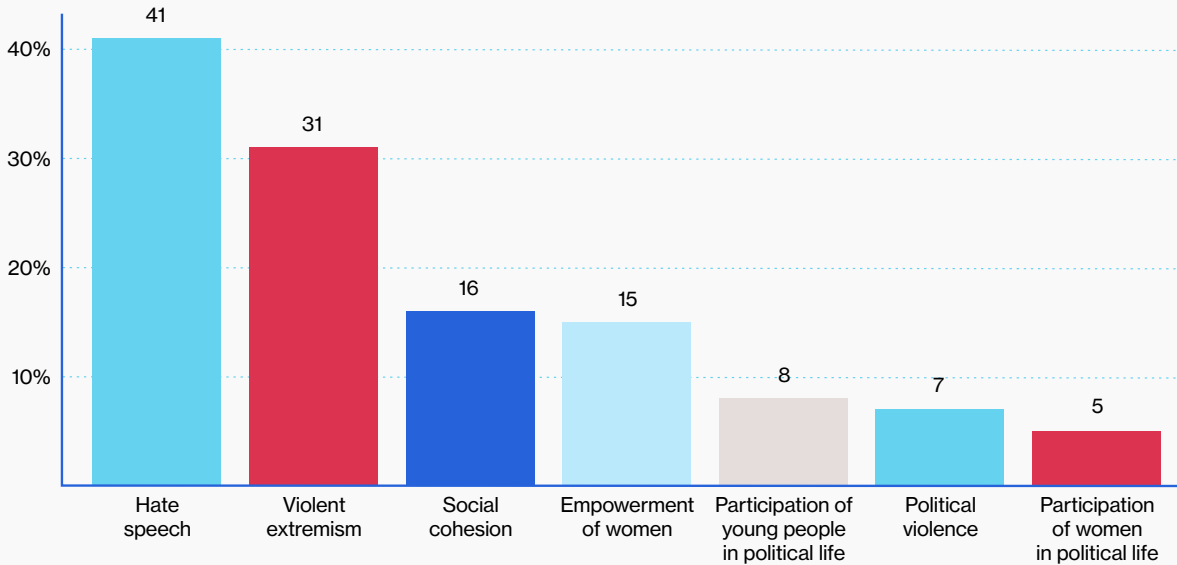

Figure 9. Civilia's contributions according to survey respondents
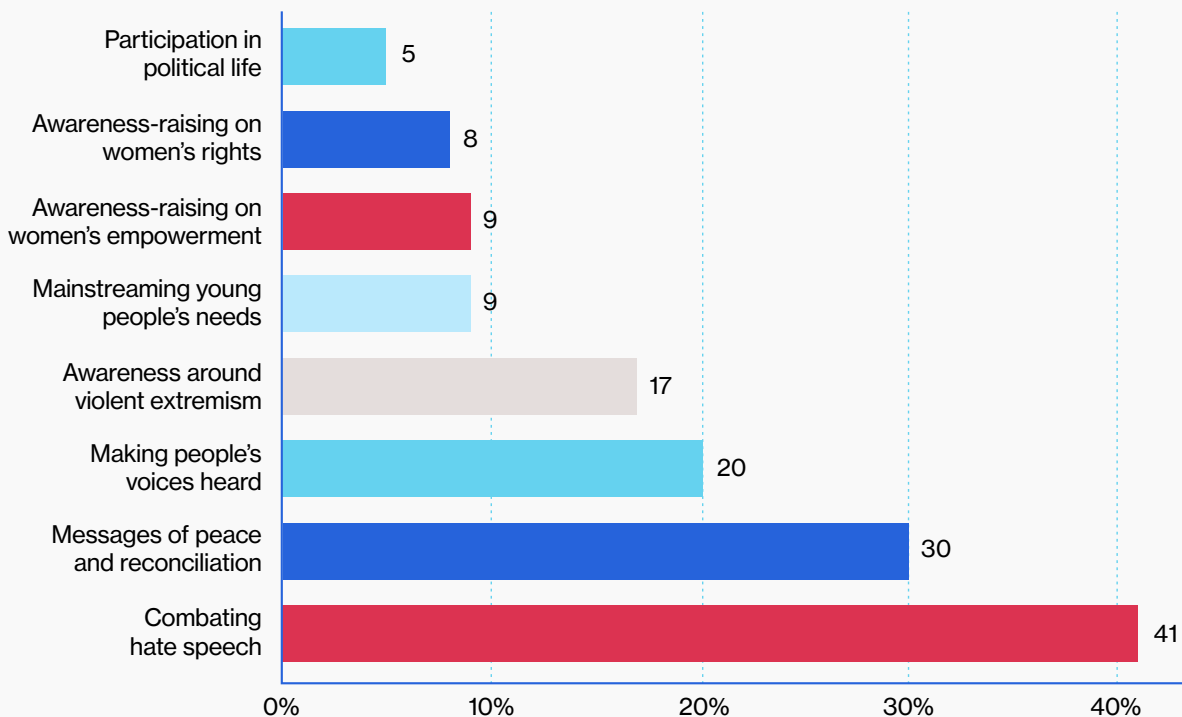
Survey respondents reported high-to-very-high levels of satisfaction with Civilia and *Carton Rouge* content (see *Figure 10*). The qualitative research suggested several reasons for this, including the choice of presenter, the time of broadcast, and the content's language and tone.

Figure 10. Survey respondents' level of satisfaction with Civilia content
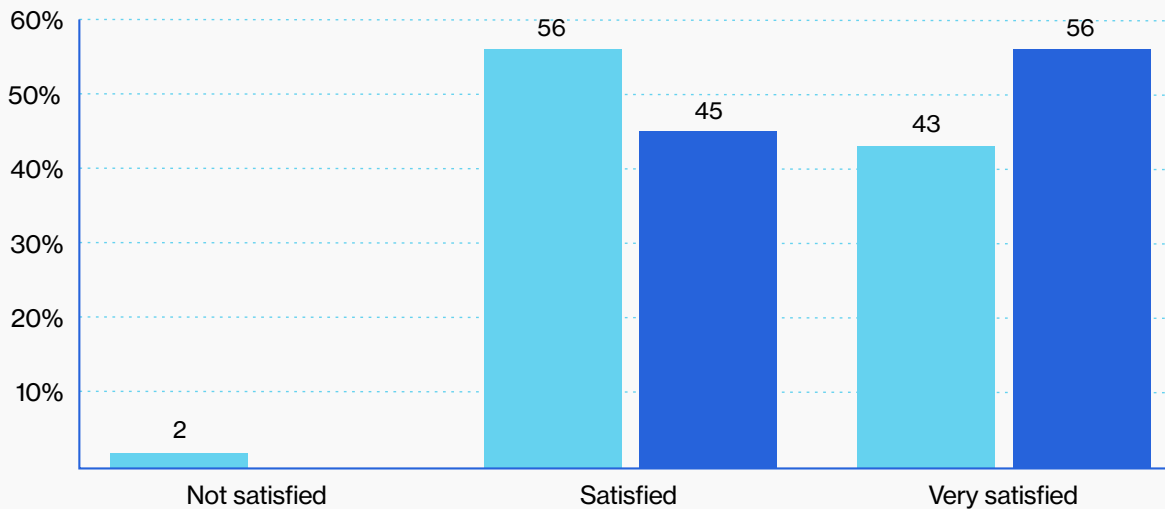
Recruiting a young woman presenter who represented 'ordinary' Ivorians meant the content used everyday language that suited the target audiences. Content often incorporated *Nouchi* youth slang.

> *"When we do awareness-raising, we need to use language that's tailored to the target population … I think that the language used is accessible to 97 percent of that population."*
>
> — Listener focus group, Radio-Arc en Ciel, Abobo

However, respondents' perceptions about the language used in Civilia and *Carton Rouge* content differed. Some noted that the language and tone changed when the original presenter left and was replaced by an avatar.

> *"When you say to a guy from Yopougon, 'Sexist comments', is he going to understand? It doesn't mean anything to him … Sometimes in debates I have to simplify things in colloquial language so that people can feel part of the debate. The language [in Civilia broadcasts] is a bit too academic. The majority of the target group … are small traders; people who don't understand, and they are the ones who go on social media to create the problems."*
>
> — Interview, Radio Yopougon representative

Project Partners' Perspectives on Civilia

Civilia was also valued highly by its partners, including NDI, and local Ivorian CSOs and radio stations. In-depth interviewees from these partners particularly cited Civilia's coverage of their work, which brought them greater visibility and community engagement. For the NDI, which does not have a dedicated communications service, Civilia filled a genuine communications gap by publicizing all its activities in Abidjan and across the country.

> *"This show supports us in our activities … At each stage of our projects, Civilia provides media coverage. It shares this on its Facebook page, on social media, and even on [national radio] … The collaboration with Civilia is great. Just last week they did media coverage of one our activities… Civilia enables us to give the PTI project … more visibility … This is one of the successes of the PTI project."*
> — Interview, partner NGO representative

> *"We don't have a dedicated communications service … Civilia… provides media coverage and creates greater awareness among the population in general, and the target groups specifically."]*
> — Interview, NDI manager

Some Civilia partners also valued its capacity building support such as strengthening the technical skills of radio station personnel and media training for partner CSOs.

> *"[Through the Civilia project,] Internews has boosted my skill s… on the production of video clips, how to gather opinions … and how to do human storytelling."*
> — Interview, PSCPD Bouaké representative

> *"We have been trained in … how to be a community manager. There has been training for journalists on using social media … and how social media contributes to a business's growth."*
> — Interview, radio Satellite FM in Korhogo representative

However, the qualitative research also highlighted the need for training to target radio practitioners rather than managers.

> *"I've been running [local Civilia output] for nearly one year and I've never taken part in a workshop … If there's a workshop, we're asking for the key person to be included even if the manager is going. But the second person who needs to go is the producer … If … the manager goes, it's not them who actually does it and they don't … have time to share [information]."*
>
> — Interview, Radio Guiglo representative

Impact

How far did Civilia Contribute to Achieving Project Objectives?

The evaluation concluded that the Civilia project contributed to achieving PTI objectives, specifically combating hate speech in Côte d'Ivoire. Its content had a positive effect on radio listeners, internet users, and the project's CSO and local radio station partners.

Civilia raised public awareness of online hate speech and its dangers, for example by highlighting the risks of trivializing *mal parlage* (banter). Project partners benefited from greater awareness of the challenges around hate speech, ways to address them, and better technical knowledge as a result of training.

The evaluation also found that Civilia contributed to strengthening peace and social cohesion in Côte d'Ivoire by increasing awareness about social cohesion and peacebuilding issues.

Producing so much content tailored to different local concerns was only possible because of the many partnerships that underpinned the Civilia project. In the run-up to the 2020 presidential elections, this enabled the project to scale up in areas affected by previous election-related conflict. Partner radio stations ended up producing or rebroadcasting more Civilia content than stipulated in their contract, reflecting how highly they valued it.

One factor in Civilia's success was creating the Facebook page before other content was produced and recruiting the original host through a competition. This generated advance interest among audiences and created a pool of around 800 potential hosts. Recruiting an unknown member of the public instead of a professional journalist as Civilia's main presenter was innovative and supported audience engagement.

> *"We had already designed the platform … a Facebook page that had already gained an audience. So [when] we created the page and… ran the competition [to find a Civilia presenter] … applicants were already following the page."*
>
> — Interview, Internews representative

How did Civilia Content Affect Target Audiences?

> *"I've got a friend who tended to comment on posts that incited violence and hate …When I told him about this show, he started listening and suddenly changed his behavior … He's no longer sharing these posts about violence."*
>
> — Listener focus group, Radio-Arc en Ciel, Abobo

> *"As young people we are always on social media … often generating bad feeling, and the more we listen to this show … the more we have … awareness … With Civilia's arrival, a lot of things have changed. Young people have now understood that being motivated by destruction is not the answer … I think … young people have … begun to distance themselves from violence."*
>
> — Listener focus group, Radio-Arc en Ciel, Abobo

Members of both Civilia's online and radio audiences promoted its content — 67 percent of respondents recommended Civilia content to their friends and relatives, perhaps reflecting their satisfaction with the content and its relevance (see *Figure 10* and *Figure 7*, respectively).

Figure 11. Survey respondents' actions after exposure to Civilia content

- Increasing awareness among friends and relatives around hate speech
- Respecting women's rights
- Increasing awareness around social cohesion
- Increasing awareness around participation in political life
- Increasing awareness around violent extremism
- Participation in peace and reconciliation initiatives
- Combating hate speech
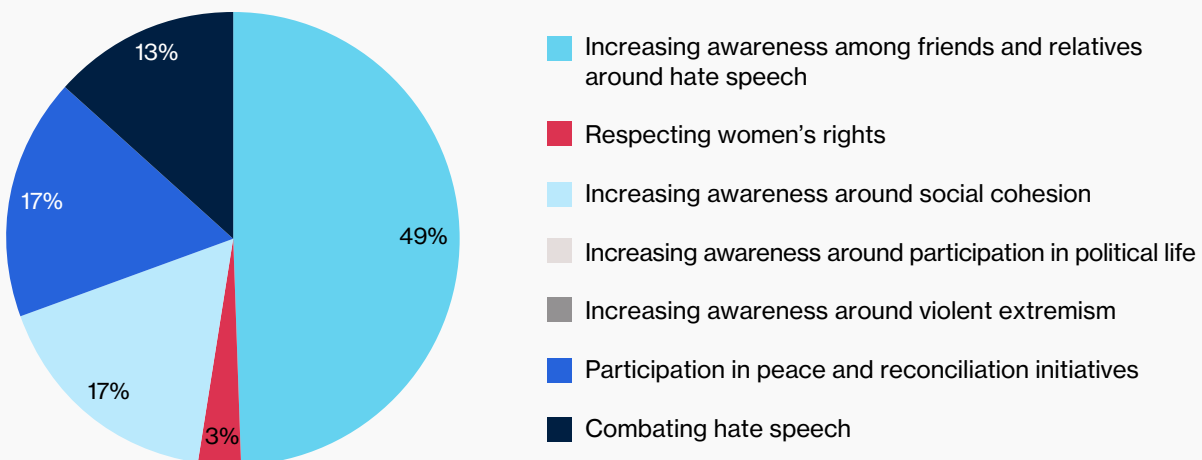
Most importantly, the survey indicates that many respondents have taken action since accessing Civilia content. Half (49 percent) of those who had done so said they had increased their friends' and relatives' awareness of hate speech, and 13 percent had actively combated hate speech. Some 17 percent had increased awareness around social cohesion or participated in peace and reconciliation initiatives (see *Figure 11*). Echoing other findings, no respondents reported having increased awareness about political participation.

Civilia's COVID-19 Activities and Impact

In a pandemic, accurate information can save lives. Although the pandemic disrupted its implementation, the Civilia team was agile in incorporating content and expert guests to raise awareness about the virus and cover protective measures such as wearing masks and accessing vaccinations. Civilia herself role modeled compliance with COVID-19 restrictions and guidance, such as working from home.

The quantitative survey indicated that 76 percent of Civilia consumers followed its COVID-19 content. The qualitative research suggests this had a positive impact on people's understanding, attitudes and behavior. An additional 99 community radio stations started broadcasting Civilia's chronicles during the pandemic.

> *"The first [COVID-19] case was on 11 March 2020 … From then on, I was following [Civilia], because she was trying to raise awareness via video, trying to show how to wash your hands … Once, she invited a doctor to provide information on the virus… On the radio after each broadcast, [Civilia] … reminded us about … COVID prevention measures … It was valuable because it reminded us that handwashing was necessary. Once, she even showed us how to wear our masks properly, so that it covered our face and nose."*
>
> — Interview, Civilia online consumer

> *"Thanks to Civilia's broadcasts, and through our radio station, people have explained the truth … The population have understood that the vaccine has not come to destroy us, but to help us fight this disease. When you go to … health centers there's enthusiasm about the vaccines."*
>
> — Listener focus group, Radio-Arc en Ciel ABOBA

Lessons Learned

The evaluation found that several factors limited the impact and effectiveness of the Civilia project. Learning from these lessons could help a future incarnation of Civilia, or a similar initiative, to achieve even more.

Language

While some research participants praised the accessibility of the language used in Civilia content, this was not universal. Over time, and especially in *Carton Rouge* episodes, Civilia content increasingly used academic French, which is not accessible for many target audience members.

Civilia's ready-to-air content was recorded exclusively in French by *Radio de la Paix* in Abidjan, and then shared with partner radio stations across Côte d'Ivoire. Only a few local radio stations, such as those in Korhogo and Duékoué, produced summaries of this content in local languages.

> *"It would be really great if [Civilia content was] in the [local] language too … It's not just Guéré that's an indigenous language … — there are the Burkinabés … the Baoulé …the Malinkés."*
>
> — Interview, Radio Bloléquin representative

Guests

The partner radio stations sometimes struggled to secure guests for discussions, especially people who have directly experienced hate speech, women, and political or government guests. This meant the same guests appeared repeatedly, narrowing the voices and perspectives available to audience members.

One challenge was the sensitivity of the topics under discussion, one was women's reluctance to discuss such topics, and another was the early morning broadcast time on *Radio de la Paix*, which presented logistical difficulties.

> *"The topics that generate hate speech are not always easy … When you ask someone to come and react to a political topic, in Côte d'Ivoire's … context, that's not easy. The other problem is that there needs to be parity in… who speak[s] … If men talk, women also need to talk … Women are not always open to speaking about sensitive issues."*
>
> — Interview, *Carton Rouge* host

> *"It's often with listener feedback that we get a little stuck … We need to vary the types of people … [but] people … are not always available."*
>
> — Interview, Bouaké Radio Saphir representative

Presenter

The departure of the original Civilia presenter caused issues because audiences were so familiar with her, and she was such an effective host who reflected audience members' concerns and speech.

The replacement avatar presenter focused on content production and interacted less with followers and audience members. This resulted in reduced traffic to the Civilia Facebook page.

> *"I listened from the second radio broadcast until now. But … I'm not listening … anymore … because of the sudden change of presenter. The host isn't animated, it's too formal."*
>
> — Interview, Civilia online consumer

Partner Challenges

Key information was not always shared with project partners in a timely way. Radio guests were sometimes not invited in time to go on air, and radio freelancers sometimes did not receive enough advance warning to cover activities.

> *"The little problem we often have is that, when it's time to … cover an activity … we're not informed early enough … Often, the activity has even already started … If you are warned in advance … you can make … arrangements."*
>
> — Interview, Radio Duekoué representative

The in-depth interviews highlighted a need to train correspondents and freelancers from local radio station partners. Although radio station managers received Civilia training, some presenters and freelancers did not, often because of staff turnover at the radio stations.

Project activities began in Béoumi and relayed on Civilia's Facebook page, but the lack of a local radio station hindered the population from staying up-to-date with Civilia activities.

Recommendations

The evaluation recommended continuing or replicating the Civilia model in future. The challenges faced by Côte d 'Ivoire and West Africa, in relation to conflict, hate speech and violent extremism, suggest that implementing, strengthening and broadening a similar intervention could have a positive impact.

Specific, actionable recommendations arising from the evaluation are listed below.

1. Adjust **topics** to address the most relevant local issues, such as gender-based violence and land management, and cover violent extremism more regularly than fortnightly, especially in northern and western border communities.

2. Cover **locations** affected by the 2020 electoral crisis, more locations in the north and west affected by violent extremism, and more Abidjan municipalities.

3. Change media **broadcast times** to increase audience reach. Analysis suggests that 7am and 12–2pm on Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays draw the biggest radio audiences in Côte d'Ivoire, but internet users tend to catch up with broadcasts at weekends and on public holidays.

4. Maximize audience engagement by producing **more visual content and shorter videos**, and via competitions and social media discussions, including WhatsApp groups.

5. **Broaden the social media platforms** used, to include Instagram, YouTube and a vlog, to increase audience reach and engagement.

6. Strengthen the presenter's and correspondents' **communication skills**.

7. Improve coordination and timely **communication with broadcast partners**.

8. **Scale up publicity** around this kind of initiative.

9. Use more effective **content analysis tools**, such as Sotrender, Scoreboard Social and Brand24.

> *"There is a lot of work to do [in Côte d'Ivoire]. Disinformation, hate speech, the democratic project, the participation of women and young people … Civilia is a pioneer and a forerunner. We must … spark other Civilias."*
>
> — Interview, donor agency representative

Internews Theory of Change

Impact: Healthy information environments enable everyone to make better-informed decisions, bridge divides, participate more fully in their communities, and hold power to account.

	Good Information	Strong Business Models
Intermediate Outcomes	Communities have increased access to good information that is trusted and trustworthy, which meets their needs and which drives transparency, accountability and participation.	Trusted and trustworthy information sources increase their reach, engagement, brand loyalty, financial sustainability and operational security.
Immediate Outcomes	Information producers consistently produce high quality accurate, evidence-based, inclusive information in diverse formats.	Information producers develop and deliver on effective business strategies.
Activities		
Challenges	News and information content is inaccurate and untrustworthy. Communities don't have good information.	Media outlets don't have business strategies; audiences and advertisers don't support local media; platforms, governments, and corporate interests dominate media markets.

Problem Statement: In an unhealthy information environment, people are unable to make informed choices, false and hateful information divides communities, citizen participation in civic life declines and the structures for holding power to account are weakened.

Internews Theory of Change

Safe, Inclusive Access	Critical Assessment	Accountable Institutions	
Marginalized groups safely access quality information that meets their needs, they are able to participate fully in society, and they can see themselves represented fairly and accurately in the media	People critically engage with information, reject false and harmful information and seek out high quality, accurate information.	Governments, institutions and platforms are held accountable for protecting human rights. Legal, regulatory and business environments support independent media and freedom of expression.	**Intermediate Outcomes**
Information consumers can safely access locally-relevant information, in languages they understand, whilst information producers meet gaps in provision.	Information consumers know how to identify false information and are motivated to reduce its spread.	Civil society is equipped to hold power to account, promote freedom of expression and ensure human rights are upheld.	**Immediate Outcomes**
			Activities
Lack of access to information on all platforms and spaces limits participation and freedom of expression. People coming online for the first time, especially ethnic, political or religious minorities, are vulnerable to harassment, surveillance and intimidation. Lack of connectivity and uneven access to adequate bandwidth limits information access in 2G areas.	Consumers' inability or unwillingness to distinguish between fact and falsehood leaves them vulnerable to manipulation and liable to participate in the spread and amplification of misinformation and disinformation, which in turn creates confusion, erodes trust, and damages democracy.	Hostile governments deliberately suppress freedom of expression in increasingly sophisticated ways, whilst technology and digital platform companies operate with little transparency or oversight. Governments and institutions are not accountable to people.	**Challenges**

Assumptions:
- Internews has the financial, technical and human resources to achieve significant reach and operate in every setting where this work is needed.
- Media and information providers share Internews´ commitment to high quality, accurate, evidence-based, inclusive information and are open to collaboration.
- The existence of shared global norms continue to value freedom of expression and independent media.
- High quality information acts as a driver of positive change.

Annex:
Research Questions

1. To what extent do target audiences find Civilia credible, reliable and trustworthy as a source of information?

2. To what extent does the content produced by Civilia contribute to achievement of the project's objectives?

3. What is the role of the Civilia Facebook page for key stakeholders and target audiences, including OSC, NDI, USAID, partner radio stations, young people, women and other Facebook pages?

4. How do young people and women in urban and rural environments respond differently to the Civilia Facebook page?

5. What do radio partners expect from Civilia, and is the project meeting their needs?

6. How would PTI and OSC partners assess Civilia's coverage of their activities?

7. What is the impact of Civilia's Facebook page on the target audience?

8. Which types of content have the most significant impact on audiences?

9. What editorial strategy might increase this impact?

10. What do audiences think of the Radio Chronicles: Civilia and Carton Rouge?

11. What would PTI partners recommend for improving Civilia's output?

12. What is the role of the Civilia Facebook page within the wider information ecosystem and social media landscape? How does it compare with other popular sites? What is its added value?

13. What are Civilia's principal sources of information?

14. How would Civilia's followers recommend her to their friends and neighbors?

15. Should the Civilia Facebook page be redesigned to better appeal to young people?

Endnotes

1   (Translation) Speech bubble 1: "I change the video's country and date and that's it!" Speech bubble 2: "Oh what?! My village is at war, argh!". This October 2020 Police Secours post devised as part of the Civilia project received 1,000 reactions and 184 shares on Facebook.

2   Wardle, C (2020) Understanding Information Disorder. First Draft essential guide. Available at: https://firstdraftnews.org/long-form-article/understanding-information-disorder/#:~:text=Disinformation%20is%20content%20that%20is%20intentionally%20false%20and,disinformation%20is%20shared%20it%20often%20turns%20into%20misinformation

3   UN (2020) "The United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech". Available at: https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/hate-speech-strategy.shtml

4   Wardle, C (2020) Understanding Information Disorder. First Draft essential guide. Available at: https://firstdraftnews.org/long-form-article/understanding-information-disorder/#:~:text=Disinformation%20is%20content%20that%20is%20intentionally%20false%20and,disinformation%20is%20shared%20it%20often%20turns%20into%20misinformation

5   USAID field visit consultations, 2016 [citation taken from PTI RFA.pdf]

6   POECI (2016) "Electoral Observation Report"

7   USAID (2015) "DRG Assessment"

8   Mercy Corps (2017) "We Hope and We Fight: Youth, Communities and Violence in Mali", p. 12

9   USAID (2017) "Promising Practices in Engaging Youth in Peace and Security and P/CVE", p. 2

10   Available at: https://www.cabri-sbo.org/en/documents/national-development-plan-2016-2020-1

11   Available at: https://www.gouv.ci/_grandossier.php?recordID=263

12   Afrobarometer Survey (2019). Available at: https://www.afrobarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/CDI_R9_Resume-des-resultats-Afrobarometer-9jan23.pdf

13   Angus-Hammond, M (2020) TV, Radio, and Social Media in Cote D'Ivoire. GeoPoll blog. Available at: https://www.geopoll.com/blog/tv-radio-social-media-cote-divoire-ivory-coast/#:~:text=Traditional%20Media%20in%20Cote%20D'Ivoire,-GeoPoll's%20study%20of&text=Radio%20also%20performs%20well%2C%20with,listening%20to%20radio%20each%20day

14   USAID/Cote D'ivoire's Political Transition and Inclusion Program

15   Initially, 'Civilia' was Prisca Koffi, a young female Ivorian who visited different regions of the country until the COVID-19 pandemic forced her to work remotely. When Prisca left the project, she was replaced with an online avatar.

16   (Translation) "Civilia was live. Hi friends. Hate speech and social cohesion. We're discussing this in the third and final Carton Rouge [Red Card] debate. Keep watching til the end. #UnitedAgainstHateSpeech"