

2008-2009 Project Proposal



STAR radio is a non-profit independent news and information radio station broadcasting nation-wide in Liberia and also in the sub-region via FM, shortwave, and the internet.



STAR radio is most accurately described as a “private” public broadcaster because of the invaluable support we provide to civil society in Liberia. We are unique in that we offer all of the citizens of Liberia independent news and information through FM, short wave, and affiliate community radio stations. We broadcast daily in English, Liberian English, French, and 14 local languages. STAR was re-built in 2005 with international donor support. We are steadily increasing our advertising revenues and fee-for-service activities with the goal of becoming financially sustainable by the end of 2008.

STAR radio was began in 1997 but was shut down in 2000 by Charles Taylor. In 2005 we began again in partnership with Fondation Hirondelle, Media for Peace and Human Dignity, with \$2.2 million from donors, mainly European countries. Since then, STAR Radio has regained its importance in Liberia and has become a major instrument in the process of post-conflict development. Our programs are the means through which Liberians entertain themselves and get the daily news, and they are also playing a proxy role for health clinics, schools, and social support networks.

Our challenge in the coming year is develop our advertising base, create new fee-based services , and find new sources of donor support. In 2007 we increased our income-generating activities, including broadcast journalist training, public service announcements and programming, advertising, and sponsorship and we can now cover approximately one-third of our annual budget through these activities. The following project proposal outlines our sustainability strategies for 2008-2009 and our plans to further strengthen our quality radio programming that informs and empowers Liberians.

Executive Summary

STAR Radio in Liberia educates, entertains, and informs. Our mission is to offer unbiased and relevant news and information in multiple languages on a nation-wide basis. STAR radio's strength is our highly trained and experienced journalist and technical staff, including our team of stringers placed throughout the country which allows us to offer a good urban-rural mix of national new coverage.

STAR was established in 1997 and was very popular among Liberians until we were forcibly closed by Charles Taylor in 2000. The station was rebuilt in 2005 with donor support from the European Commission, United Kingdom, Switzerland, Norway, and the Netherlands. The rebirth holds special significance among Liberians as an important symbolic development in the post-conflict period. Since coming back on the air, STAR radio has regained its position as a media of reference in West Africa through the professionalism news reporting and relevance of our feature programs.

In a nation recovering from 14 years of war, STAR radio is currently a main means of communication. We offer an extensive schedule of programs on current affairs and news as well as an internet website with audio programs. STAR broadcasts on FM to approximately 65% of the population 14.5 hours daily in English, Liberian English, and French as well as 14 local languages. Our programs are rebroadcast through community radio stations and are also transmitted daily via shortwave (this has recently been considerably reduced due to financial constraints) as well as through the internet.

STAR radio makes tremendous contributions in terms of civic engagement and encouragement of fair, effective, transparent governance. The coverage of the 2005 presidential elections by STAR radio was nation-wide with journalists stationed in the rural parts of the country. Information on voters, political parties, candidates and the election process was dispatched and aired live. International observers – among them the European Elections Observers Mission - commended our time-allocation to candidates and overall neutrality in tone. The performance of the government is a topic of continuing debate on STAR radio as transparency and governance remain key issues in Liberia's development.

STAR radio's broad appeal comes from our inherent simplicity. Many of our radio programs help show that people face similar problems, including "Women Special," "Inside Your Community," "Youth Forum," "We Too Have a Voice," "From the Counties," and "Let's Find Out."

In 2007 we continued to build upon our reputation for top-notch reporting, but the year was marked by shortfalls in donor funding. STAR has created new ways of generating income which we are interested in expanding in the coming years. Notably, we signed contracts with USAID to provide training and capacity-building to community radio stations. STAR is now widely recognized as a high-quality journalist training venue. Sponsorship and fee-for-service activities also brought significant income.

STAR radio's greatest short-term challenge is finding a sustainable balance between local income generation and donor support. As a non-profit public service media operating in a post-conflict landscape, STAR radio can, after only two and a half years, generate enough funds to cover a third of our 2008-2009 budget through income-generating activities. There are many factors that will allow us to increase revenues. This project proposal outlines how STAR radio will expand our income-generating activities in the coming two years.

While gearing up to this challenge, STAR radio continues to seek new sources of donor support to put us on a solid track into 2008 and 2009 so that we may continue setting the standard for independent and accurate news, information and cultural programming in West Africa.

Background

Current Issues Facing Liberia

Post-war Liberia is coping with high levels of unemployment, large numbers of ex-combatants, and a ruined infrastructure, all within a context of extreme poverty and disease. Civil servants are ill-paid, the education system was all but destroyed during the war years, electricity and water systems are still being reconstructed, and the government budget is only a fraction of what the UN's 15,000 peacekeepers in Liberia cost in a year.

The crucial issues remain job provision, infrastructure development, improving investment opportunities, enhancing the respect of fundamental human rights, ensuring press freedom, and promoting of good governance through openness, transparency, and accountability.

Some gains have been made in all of these areas since the fourteen years of civil war ended in Liberia. If the Liberian government of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf fails to build on this progress, civil unrest could resume. With further progress, however, Liberia stands a chance of providing a regional source of stability and, with time, economic development that can benefit the entire country.

Challenges Facing Liberia in 2008- 2009

Security

- Security sector reform and training, including the restructuring of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) and the Liberian National Police
- The rehabilitation and reintegration of ex-combatants
- The question of re-arming of the security forces to combat rising crime

Human Rights and Rule of Law

- Continuing human rights violations including forced labor and child labor
- An outdated court system lacking prosecutors and adequate juvenile courts
- Management of the prison system

Economic revitalization "*For us, jobs are synonymous with peace*" - Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf

- An unemployment rate estimated at 80%
- Lack of transport, telecommunications and energy infrastructure
- Few domestic private sector institutions (especially SMEs)
- Endemic corruption
- Inadequate access to education and vocational training

Health

- A rapidly growing infection rate of HIV/AIDS
- Poor maternal health and growing rates of child mortality, malaria and nutritional-related health problems
- Lack of health and hygiene related knowledge among both rural and urban populations
- Nearly inexistent health and sanitation infrastructure

Environment

- Lack of public awareness in resource management and conservation
- Sporadic enforcement at the national level of laws and strategies to protect the environment as industrial, mining, agricultural and forestry sectors resume growth

Women

- Lack of gender equity, unequal access to education and opportunity
- Gender based violence

Community development and reintegration

- Repatriation of IDPs and the return of refugees and their resettlement

The Media Situation in Liberia

As in many other African countries, Liberia is struggling to create a viable market in which news and information flow freely and various types of media contribute to the national debate. The Liberian media enjoys freedom, but journalists still do not always have the means to perform adequately because of limited operations budgets.

The media industry is one of the fastest areas of recovery in the country, but Liberia's economy is still underdeveloped and cannot provide sufficient commercial support. According to the Media Foundation for West Africa and The Partnership for Media and Conflict Prevention in West Africa, the Liberian media face a variety of obstacles, including poor management, lack of independent funding resources, overly-competitive advertising markets, and other political and economic pressures.

Since 2004 an initiative to begin a media law reform process has been underway. Proposed media laws have been drafted and agreed upon by a broad range of Liberian stakeholders for passage into law as soon as possible. The new laws would establish an independent broadcasting regulator and put into law a freedom of information act and a national public broadcasting service act. The proposed laws would bring Liberian media into substantial conformity with regional and international standards for the protection of media freedom to ensure that media plays an optimal role in the reconstruction of Liberia.

It is recognized that enactment of the three draft laws will require a high level of political will within the government for enforcement, as well as considerable resources. For example, the act establishing a broadcasting regulator will require hiring and funding a regulatory body as well as turning over various functions to that new authority, including licensing of broadcasting stations, which are presently carried out by different ministries and departments. Effective implementation of the Freedom of Information Act will require a complete overhaul of the record-keeping and management practices of the Government. The Partnership for Media and Conflict Prevention in West Africa, supported by the Media Foundation of West Africa, is heading reform efforts in these areas, as well as representing media interests in the development of the Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy (iPRS) document. Its main focus is to urge the Government of Liberia and bilateral donors to seriously invest in media development in a long-term, coordinated approach.

Print Media

The newspaper environment in Liberia faces a range of challenges including poor funding and lack of capital as well as managerial and communication constraints. There is a perception that the newspaper market is saturated, but most newspapers sell less than 3,000 copies a day across the country, despite the population of 3 million Liberians. There are approximately 38 newspapers, although only 13 to 18 publish regularly. The high illiteracy rate (about 80%) largely accounts for low circulation. The distribution of newspapers to locations outside Monrovia is largely affected by the poor infrastructure. Due to high printing costs, a newspaper is sold at price much too expensive in a society with very high unemployment. Most papers depend on advertisements and in the present environment of low economic activity in the post-conflict period in Liberia, international agencies and relief organizations are the main sources of advertising income.

Radio Sector

Radio is the most prevalent form of information dissemination in Liberia. A common sight in communities throughout Liberia is a gathering of people – young and old, men and women – crowded around a radio listening to the latest news. Radio has flourished and increased in plurality and diversity. Frequency allocation is done following registration and payment of fees to the Liberia Telecom Authority (LTA).

Most of the fifteen stations currently operating in Monrovia are privately owned, operate only on FM, and play music and carry advertisements as well as announcements. During the 2005 presidential elections, half of these stations openly or covertly supported individual candidates or political parties.

There are about 47 community radio stations outside of Monrovia, out of which approximately 35 are active. Many of these stations were established and have been supported by Mercy Corps, an American NGO, with USAID funds. They have broad listenership in the community but tend to lack funds, training or technical expertise. Most of the journalists working with the local radio stations have no journalistic training but were recruited based on their creativity and interest in the profession. The stations have limited reach of approximately 5 miles but extensive music programming, as well as local community news. Many re-broadcast UNMIL radio news or UNMIL briefings. At present six community stations rebroadcast STAR radio programming through an affiliate relationship with STAR which provides training.

Radio Stations

STAR radio (FM 104, SW 9525, website: www.starradio.org.lr) is today one of the only public access radios in Liberia providing national coverage on a reliable basis on FM and SW. It serves as a “private” public broadcaster given the significant support it provides to civil society and reconstruction efforts. STAR radio is a unique mix of a not-for-profit public service radio that pursues fee-for-service activities to generate income to cover its annual expenses. STAR was established in 1997 with donor funds and in partnership with Fondation Hirondelle, Media for Peace and Human Dignity, and operated until to 2000 when it was closed forcibly by Charles Taylor. The first STAR radio station represented a successful and tangible effort to establish a professional and independent media in Liberia.

STAR radio was rebuilt in 2005 in partnership with Fondation Hirondelle, Media for Peace and Human Dignity, and with the support of the European Union, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Norway and the Netherlands. Many of the original STAR radio staff returned to continue with the newly rebuilt station. Since 2005, we have played an important role as a media leader. During this period Liberia elected Africa’s first woman president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, and her newly elected government began the daunting task of rebuilding Liberia. STAR is independent. In the 2005 elections, STAR was commended by the international community for its fair time-allocation to candidates and overall neutrality in tone. In the recent Press Union of Liberia awards for 2006, STAR radio was awarded Radio Station of the Year and Talk Show of the Year (“I Beg to Differ”), as well as awards for the best journalists in investigative reporting, legislative reporting and sports.

STAR radio offers programs on current affairs and news, we broadcast 14.5 hours a day (down from 17 hours a day) in 14 Liberian languages (down from 18 languages) as well as French, English and Liberian English, and we offer a website with audio uploading which is highly used by the diaspora. The station currently reduced its staff to 50 from 70 due to financial constraints. Staff salaries were reduced by an average of 20% in 2006 as an additional cost saving measure.

Veritas (FM 97.8 & SW) was established in 1997 and is owned by the Catholic Church. It provides current affairs and entertainment and broadcasts in English and some local Liberian languages. Its short wave coverage is limited. Its programming is 75 percent general and 25 percent religious and relies on in-house production mostly and makes use of few programmes from independent sources.

ELWA (FM 94.5 and shortwave). ELWA (Eternal Love Winning Africa) was established in 1954 but closed from 1990 to 1992 due to rocket damage. Its programs are mainly focused on Christian issues.

SKY (FM 107) is a private station owned by Martin Brown and T Max Jlateh. Its programming includes current affairs, advertisement and entertainment. It broadcasts in English.

LCBN (FM 102.2) was established in 2002 and offers programs focused on Christian issues and broadcasts in English. It is operated by a Monrovia church group.

King's (FM 88.5) and **City** (FM 90.2) are owned by Royal Communications Inc and were established in 2004 by George Weah. They broadcast in English 18 hours a day and relay UNMIL news and programs.

Crystal (FM 95.5) was established in 2004 and is owned by a group of Liberian journalists with reported links to pro-Charles Taylor political entities. Its programming includes current affairs, advertisement and entertainment and its reach covers most of Monrovia.

City Power (FM 93.3) is owned by Infinity Corp. and was established in 2005 by a group of Liberian journalists with reported links to Liberia Communication Network created during the Charles Taylor era. Programming includes current affairs and music and are broadcast in English. It is development oriented, with programming on sanitation, health, social issues, as well as programs from Talking Drum Studio (Search for Common Ground).

Love (FM 105) was established in 2005 and is privately owned by a member of the civil society and a Liberian politician. Its programs include current affairs and music and it broadcasts in English.

Truth (FM 96.1 & TV) was established in 2005 and is privately owned by a Liberian politician. Its programs include current affairs and entertainment.

ELBC (FM 99.9) was established in 1960 and is state owned. It provides current affairs and entertainment and broadcasts in English, French and some local Liberian languages. It is run by the Liberia Broadcasting System (LBS) which was established in the 1940s and comprised the FM radio station ELBC, a short wave radio station and a TV station. The state-owned LBS was situated in Paynesville on the outskirts of Monrovia and changed hand several times between opposing factions during the civil war and was significantly damaged. At the end of the conflict, only one of its two buildings was functional and most equipment destroyed.

The new LBS Director, Mr. Charles Snetter (former founder of Radio Monrovia and one of the first Liberians to open an FM station in the country) appears keen to empower the national radio, attract international funds and enlarge the activities of ELBC throughout the country. Strengthened by support from USAID, LBS acquired new equipment in 2006. Studios have been redesigned and the newsroom has been transformed and refurbished. A website has been launched. As a consequence of these developments, the output of reporters and programs has been strengthened considerably, including the program "Liberian Panorama." Since September 2006 a show has begun featuring the President speaking to the nation on the last Tuesday of every month. Live broadcasts are done outside Monrovia and the signal is received all along the country's border with Sierra Leone. Recently, the Government of China has offered to provide LBS with support. Encouraged by this development, the LBS management is negotiating with several entities for the establishment of a TV channel that will broadcast nationwide.

UNMIL Radio (FM 91.5) was established in 2003 by the United Nations. Its broadcasts focus on public information of United Nations activities and peacekeeping/security. Established in accordance with the UN mandate for Liberia, the station is well-equipped and presently reaches most of the country. The station is led by the Chief of Radio, Joseph Roberts-Mensha, an experienced radio practitioner from Ghana. UNMIL has a FM transmitter in Monrovia and

several FM transmitters across the country in key locations. The station broadcasts 24 hours a day in English and Liberian English, although not in local languages. The programs mainly focus on the operations and programmes of the international community and Government, thus following a public information model. The decision on the future of the UN radio in Liberia and its equipment at the end of UNMIL's mandate is yet to be taken, but there are indications that the facilities may be turned over to the Government of Liberia.

Regional Radio Initiatives

WADR (17875 shortwave) is West African Democracy Radio (WADR) and it broadcasts in English and French on short-wave and on FM 94.9 in Dakar. The coverage extends to the entire West Africa and parts of Europe. It is supported by the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA). The Liberian office of the WADR has three reporters stationed in Monrovia, and reporters from community radio stations up-country contribute stories to WADR Monrovia office. The local office produces programs on human rights, gender issues, health, youth and democracy. Ordinary citizens are the main sources of WADR stories. WADR has an MoU with 9 community radio stations under which they relay its programs from Dakar. The stations are in turn given small grants from OSIWA, WADR's, sole donor.

International Radio Initiatives

Search for Common Grounds / Talking Drum Studio focuses on peace building through mediation, empowerment and reconciliation. It produces programs/drama that are aired on local private FM stations in Monrovia, among these are STAR radio as well as community radio stations.

Mercy Corps provides support for media enhancement through training and equipment for community radio stations.

Television

A few television channels have appeared in Liberia, although there is still no functioning national television station. International television channels are easily accessible by satellite, but access is dependent on subscription, which is expensive and therefore only regularly viewed by the more wealthy segment of the population.

Overview of STAR radio

STAR radio is unique as it is the only station in West Africa that broadcasts independent news and information in English, Liberian English, French as well as 14 Liberian languages (Bassa, Belleh, Dan, Gbandi, Gola, Grebo, Kissi, Kpelleh, Krahn, Kru, Lorma, Mandingo, Mano, Mende, Sarpo, Vai), most of which are spoken in the neighboring countries. With the production and broadcast of 14.5 hours daily, STAR radio reaches roughly 60% of the estimated 3.6 million people in Liberia with FM and covers the entire country as well as most of the Sub-region with one-half hour daily of short wave broadcasts. STAR radio moreover operates a website on which the Liberian Diaspora has access to updated information and to downloadable audio files, thus allowing Liberians abroad to follow the station's main programs and keep abreast of news in Liberia.

STAR radio Target Audiences

- All populations living in Monrovia and the surrounding area (FM coverage is estimated at more than 1.5 million people)
- All populations living up-country (SW and FM on partner community stations estimated at 2,000,000 people)

- All populations in the areas bordering Liberia (Ivory Coast, Guinea/Guinée-Forestière and Sierra Leone), as well as Liberian refugees (SW coverage)
- Members of the Liberian Diaspora and international stakeholders (Internet).

STAR radio Program Schedule Overview

News & Information Programs

- 10 minutes top of the hour news.
- *Day Break Liberia*, the widely listened hour of current affairs at dawn.
- *Midday News*, half an hour at lunch time.
- *Evening News*, an hour in the evening.
- *From the Counties* covers current affairs and development issues from rural Liberia.
- *Meet the Politicians* interviews guest politicians and discusses a specific reconstruction topic.
- *From the Capitol* highlights the weekly activities from the Legislature.
- *The Executive Review* highlights weekly events from the Executive Mansion and the Capitol.
- *STAR Sport* gives news about sporting activities in Liberia and the rest of the world.
- *Media Watch* reviews the week's highlights in the media/press.

Programs with Public Debate and Listener Participation

- *I Beg To Differ* showcases guests who discuss a topic of interest to society while providing opposing views.
- *People Talk* focuses on issues that impact people's lives with guests from all levels of society and topics cut across all sectors.
- *Developing Rural Communities* is a sponsored program featuring stakeholder involvement in rural development, from the identification of projects to their implementation by local actors.

Programs Designed for Specific Audiences

- *Women Special* is a feature program that has recently covered topics such as rape, living with HIV, and violence against women and children.
- *Kids Talk* is a show hosted and produced by youth, addressing topics as diverse as the Liberian national hymn and the rape of children.
- *We Too Have A Voice* is a program that discusses the problems facing members of the disabled community and their activities.
- *Farmers' Forum* is a feature program that discusses farming practices and successes.

Public Service Programs

- *Ask the Expert*. An expert discusses issues on a chosen topic to provide information and education for the benefit of the general public.
- *Keep Liberia Clean*. A public awareness program that focuses on the unsanitary condition of Liberia and approaches for community participation.
- *STAR Contact*. Guests send messages to relatives and loved ones or seek to restore contacts with missing relatives.
- *Let's Find Out*. Feature program taking an in-depth look at current events in all sectors of Liberian life, from the importation of rice to relations in the Sub-Region.
- *STAR Mix*. Feature program that offers a variety of topics including communities, traffic problems, STAR's programs, etc.

Programs with Special Features

- *The Visit*. Journalist give a descriptive account of an organization, local or international, and looks at how its line of service/business impacts on society.
- *STAR Spotlight*. Reports on personalities/individuals and their achievements and failures.
- *Faith and Society*. Provides information about religion and spiritual matters.

Entertainment Programs

- *I Remember*. Guests reflect on events that brought some change to his/her life.
- *French by Radio*. French lessons taught by radio.
- *Remember Me*. Phone-in program intended for exchanging messages with loved ones.
- *STAR Saturday Special*. A program of relaxation.
- *Liberian Beat*. Features Liberian artists, their music and their possible contributions to the peace process.
- *Make Liberia Smile*. A Tension-Relief program that features jokes and amusement.

The STAR Team and Technical Setup

The STAR radio staff is 100% Liberian. STAR had to cut its staff due to budget constraints and ended 2006 with a technical and administrative staff of 64, reduced even further to 50 at the end of 2007. STAR radio staff are dedicated, hard working and flexible, qualities especially brought to the forefront during cost-cutting measures during the past two years that resulted in an average of 20% salary cuts across the board. STAR radio has remained committed to equity and equal opportunity in all employment and training programs, with special emphasis on ensuring that women play a key role in management and broadcasting.

STAR radio's FM 1 KW transmitter is operational on 104 FM and the tower is equipped with 8 antennas (dipole) that give an estimated output of 12 KW; a signal has been picked up as far as Buchanan, some 120 kilometers away.

STAR radio is broadcasting for 1/2 hour a day on short wave which carries programs over large parts of the Sub-region from the Island of Asuncion in the South Atlantic. The SW broadcasts are sent by audio ftp files to the shortwave provider, from where they are up linked to a satellite for transmission. The set-up in Monrovia includes two studios (broadcast and recording), a newsroom, and management and production offices.

The STAR radio Board of Directors

STAR radio is governed by a Board of Directors comprised of six members. The Board is entirely Liberian and includes four women, including the President of the Board, Hawah Goll-Kotchi. Formally re-constituted on 27 April 2005, STAR radio's Board of Directors has held meetings approximately every six weeks with special meetings as needed. The Board ensures that STAR radio is led by an excellent leadership and provides governance for the station, as well as promotion of an enduring professional attitude, sound editorial control and ethical conduct. The Board has final decision-making powers.

With the appointment of four current members to the new government, the Board is in a period of transition as it identifies potential new members from Liberian Civil Society, a process that will enable STAR to embark with a fresh perspective on the key challenge of sustainability.

STAR radio Partners

Fondation Hirondelle

Fondation Hirondelle, Media for Peace and Human Dignity, was a founding partner with STAR radio, taking responsibility of building STAR and later focusing mainly on fundraising, equipment procurement, and financial oversight. The partnership between Fondation Hirondelle and STAR radio was revised in a new Memorandum of Understanding which took effect January 1, 2008. Fondation Hirondelle is now considered as "a donor among all other donors."

USAID-OTI

STAR radio entered into an agreement with USAID in 2006 and 2007 which provided technical assistance and journalistic training to Liberian community radio stations. OTI also offered support in relocating STAR radio in 2007 and assisted with two years of rent costs.

Fourah Bay College, Freetown, Sierra Leone

STAR radio provided technical assistance and media training at Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone as well as hosted student journalists in Monrovia for “hands-on” training.

Search for Common Grounds/Talking Drum Studio (TDS)

STAR radio airs TDS programs (Soap Opera, Jujay Drama, and Golden Kids News, etc.) that focus on reconciliation and minority issues.

UN Public Information Unit & UNMIL radio

There is a close working relationship and a high level of professional respect between UNMIL radio and STAR.

German Agro-Action

GAA initiated ‘Farmers’ Forum,’ a feature program that focuses on farmers and farming activities. It is intended to highlight agriculture program initiatives and activities. It also provides information and education to farmers and encourages more participation.

UNHCR

As the only organization able to broadcast independent news and features to refugees, returnees and IDPs throughout Liberia and in the border areas, UNHCR and STAR radio work together to design a close cooperation for programming and news that targets these populations.

Save the Children-UK

STAR radio entered into an agreement to produce awareness programs for youth clubs throughout Liberia to give a voice to Liberian youth and their concerns and hopes for the future.

University of Liberia- Zurich University of Applied Sciences Winterthur

STAR radio will serve as a case study for this project investigating the quality of media content (radio news and programs) in Liberia and the responses of the audience to it, in order to enhance knowledge about the role of media for public communication in countries with high levels of poverty and characterized by unstable democracy. Training in content analysis will take place at the University of Liberia.

STAR radio has Contributed Significantly to Liberia’s Post-Conflict Transformation

In Liberia and the West African sub-region, radio remains the most efficient, affordable and rapid means of reaching large audiences, especially when high rates of illiteracy continue to prevail. In Liberia, STAR radio’s independent news and information:

- responsibly serves as society’s watchdog.
- serves as a catalyst for citizens’ decision-making on issues that affect their lives.
- raises audience expectations for media services.
- gives “voice” to communities and individuals.

STAR radio has followed the transitional process in Liberia and evolved with the rapid changes of the society, attracting traditionally marginalized radio audiences, youth and women, as well as the disabled, with programs responding to their needs, tastes and expectations. It is widely recognized that STAR radio’s independent radio reporting during the transitional phase accomplished the following:

- mitigated political propaganda and inter-ethnic hate messages because STAR radio could immediately balance any biased reporting when it appeared.
- enhanced the journalistic standards in Liberia because other media institutions rapidly felt compelled to copy STAR radio's professional approach, especially given that training at STAR was open to all Liberian journalists free of charge.
- served as an icebreaker on sensitive issues such as corruption, good governance, and human rights abuses.

Project Description

The Next Chapter: Consolidating STAR radio's Successes and Achieving Sustainability

STAR radio was first created to accompany the Liberian political transition that culminated in the elections of November 2005, but it has achieved significantly more. Above all, we have positively impacted the national media landscape. STAR can boast the following successes:

- Our programs of news and information are professional, impartial and objective and are widely perceived as such by our listeners.
- Our reporting covers issues of importance to all populations in Liberia and the border areas, including the most disadvantaged.
- Our journalists encourage the expression of opposing views and seriously consider all suggestions and criticisms of our programs.
- Our program hosts encourage people's participation in our programs.
- Our senior staff is actively involved with the development of Liberia's media industry.
- Our regard for reaching all people in Liberia is affirmed by our broadcasting in 14 local languages in addition to English, French and Liberian English: we receive high praise from all sectors for this effort.
- Our staff is all Liberian and we prioritize gender diversity.
- Our formal registration in Liberia is complete and correct: STAR radio has been incorporated in Liberia as a non-for-profit organization with a Liberian Board of Directors and with articles of incorporation.
- Our self-generated income is growing each month from training, program sponsorship, advertisements, announcements, and web-based services.

STAR Radio Can Achieve Even More in 2008 and 2009

STAR radio has the ability to continue to push journalistic standards higher in our role as a major media leader in Liberia and the sub-region and to improve on the gains we have made in financial sustainability. In the near future, we have three important advantages to focus on:

- STAR radio is a highly respected and recognizable "brand" name among all of the Liberian population. "STAR" is a household word because of the quality programming we offer which is considered reliable and impartial. STAR is also highly regarded because the rebirth of the station in 2005 after being forcibly closed by Charles Taylor remains symbolically important to all Liberians.
- In addition to our reputation and trademark, STAR radio has gained in a very short time experience and expertise in marketing and advertising. We have an excellent sales record for advertising, and this is saying a lot in an economy experiencing 80% unemployment. There are many reasons to expect that this will increase in 2008 and 2009 as inflation decreases (down to 8% in 2006) and unemployment rates begin to drop. STAR radio

has several advantages over other radios, including reach, diversity of our audience base, digital equipment, and trained sales force.

- STAR has become a regional center for journalist training. We successfully completed two training projects, one financed by USAID and another by Cotton Tree News in Sierra Leone. Through these projects, we supplied equipment and journalistic “hands-on” training. In late 2007 our accomplishments were recognized by Irish Aid who offered an additional grant to begin expanding these activities with journalists from community radio stations throughout Sierra Leone.

Maximizing Revenue in 2008 and 2009

Radio is, potentially, the most sustainable of all communications media in Liberia. During 2008 STAR radio will focus on the following strategic framework for enhancing our capabilities in earning revenue to cover our costs and, if possible, reverse downsizing measures undertaken over the last two years due to funding shortages:

Marketing and Sales

Situation: A salesperson paid on commission, Janet Reffell, was hired in 2006 and has become an invaluable member of the STAR team. She has created a broad network of clients throughout Monrovia and is presently able to generate between \$3,500 and \$5,000 per month in advertising and sponsorship revenues (highest in holiday periods). There are plans to study the idea of hiring another marketing person. Some of the advertising spots are created by STAR radio staff, others are created by the advertisers themselves. An international consultant hired by Fondation Hirondelle, Michel Colin, provided a week-long training and mentoring course at STAR radio in December 2007 which focused on ways to increase revenues through new marketing activities and better sales techniques and improve the quality of radio advertisements. As a result, STAR radio is now undertaking special events and live remotes (OB unit) with partner advertisers as a first step in increasing institutional attention towards sales and marketing activities. Monrovia’s economy is notable in that it is very poor, there is little discretionary income among consumers, and there are few national brand names. The advertising market in Liberia is divided between a few big advertisers in the cellphone industry, international organizations and NGOs, and then a large number of small retail traders who are generally resistant to the idea of spending money on advertising. Broadcast media leaders in Monrovia, including STAR radio, came together in late 2007 and agreed formally on a set of floor prices for radio and tv advertising. This agreement should be effective in curbing over-competition in local advertising markets which drives advertising rates below the cost of production.

Objective: During 2008 and 2009 STAR radio will work to increase the proportion of its budget covered by advertising, sponsorship, and announcements. Advertising goals per month per type of activity (advertising spots, sponsorships, live remote, and public announcements) have been set.

Strategy: STAR radio’s strategy is to have a more pro-active approach to advertising and marketing, and to make these activities a part of the operations on equal footing with journalistic and technical activities. This means taking on new kinds of marketing activities such as events, promotions, and self-advertising on air. STAR radio plans to review its free programs aired by STAR radio as part of its public broadcasting mandate and perhaps switch them to paid programs. Finally, it will be up to STAR radio to educate business owners and other advertising clients of the benefits of advertising. The training on sales and marketing in December 2007 should be useful in this regard. STAR will collect success stories and

testimonials from its current clients to prove the effectiveness of its radio advertising to new clients.

Training

Situation: One major hurdle at producing a vibrant post-crisis media landscape is lack of training opportunities. The Mass Communication Department at the University of Liberia still lies in ruin where the civil war left it. Most of the country's current generation of journalists learned on the job during the crisis years when a majority of the qualified professionals fled. Every sector of the Liberian society recognizes the need for training of media practitioners to address ethical issues. STAR radio has begun to fill this void of training journalists using hands-on professional experience and mentoring at its studios. We have received three contracts for training journalists in the area from donors, including USAID, Fondation Hirondelle, and Irish Aid. The training has focused on "hands-on" experience and has been viewed as a major success by both participants and donors.

Objective: During the coming year training opportunities will be pursued with community radio stations in Liberia and Sierra Leone (financed by USAID and Irish Aid, respectively) and also with journalist interns at Cotton Tree News in Sierra Leone's Fourah Bay College (financed by Fondation Hirondelle). We will also offer donors the opportunity to finance an expansion of this training to other journalists in the country and region.

Strategy: STAR Radio is proposing to expand its training services through grant support to the following activities:

- Improve basic professional skills and understanding of journalistic ethics for new entrants in the media.
- Provide specialised training for mid-career and senior media practitioners
- Offer Internships to complement journalism and mass communication programs.
- Create linkages with other African training and education institutions.
- Assist media managers to develop their skills in business planning and management.

Further Areas for Development at STAR radio

- Increase proposals sent to small grant projects in Liberia as a means to gain new donor support.
- Improve the management operational plan for the station to improve and perhaps integrate web, publicity, and donor partnership activities.
- Develop a long-term business plan.
- Develop in-house training capacities in media sales and marketing so that STAR staff will be able to teach these subjects in STAR radio journalism training seminars.

Project Expected Results, Activities and Indicators, 2008 - 2009

Project Structure	Indicators	Means of Verification	Risks & Assumptions
<p><i>Overall Goal</i></p> <p>To make a lasting contribution to peace, the consolidation of democracy, good governance and development in Liberia by fostering the availability - for all strata of the Liberian society – of relevant, independent and professional radio programs and by providing fora for debates and exchanges among all the population and stakeholders.</p>	<p>Content analysis and research shows that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - listeners knowledge on specific topics has increased - listeners expectations and centre of interest are wider - listeners interest about governance is increased - listeners presence in the public debate is increased <p>Attitude/impact research empirically suggests that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - governance transparency and accountability are increased partly as a result of STAR programs - political decisions are positively influenced by STAR programs. 	<p>Content analysis final report (Zurich University, see pg 10)</p> <p>STAR year-end report</p> <p>Functional interviews with civil society, media stakeholders and political actors</p>	<p><u>Assumptions</u></p> <p>The political and security situation in Liberia does not deteriorate.</p> <p>The sub-regional political environment does not negatively interfere with the country's development.</p> <p>International pressure for reform, financial support, and presence in-country facilitate the development of a democratic society.</p> <p>Growth occurs in both rural and urban economies, enhancing the development of sustainable medias.</p> <p>Development of a diversified and rich media environment is not hampered by censorship laws, intimidation, or restrictive media laws.</p>

Project Structure	Indicators
<p><i>Activities</i></p> <p>OUTPUT 1: STAR radio program schedule combining news, current affairs, education, debates, and other programs reflects the public expectations and attracts an increased and more diversified audience.</p> <p><u>Activities to diversify programme schedule and content:</u></p> <p>Training for reporting on health issues.</p> <p>Enhanced production of features on governance and civic education.</p> <p>Foster more evening shows and debates.</p> <p>Foster interactive fora with audience (listeners suggestions, text messages, email, calls-in, etc.).</p> <p>Update music database and software.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Specific new program and grant development with relevant bodies on good governance, decentralization of government, Truth and reconciliation Commission, Concessions Commission, Security Sector Reform. - Women’s Special addresses health, gender equity, education and economic issues of special concern to women. - News reporting from the TRC, Capital and Parliament. -“From the Counties”, “Farmer’s Forum” and “Developing Rural Liberia” address subjects of concern to rural Liberia. - New and information is produced and broadcast in 16 local languages in addition to English, Liberian English and French. -A special program feature news and stories of interest to refugees, IDPs and returnees is produced and Broadcast on FM and SW. - A feature is on economic issues of importance to Small and Medium Sized business in Liberia is produced and broadcast. - % of audiences’ input increases. - A new musical data base featuring local regional and global music is operational and updated on a regular basis.

Project Structure	Indicators
<p>OUTPUT 2: An improved broadcasting network combining STAR radio own FM relays, partner radios broadcast capacity, the SW and the internet increases the number of potential listeners.</p> <p><u>Activities to ensure optimum coverage:</u></p> <p>Maintain FM transmitter present capacity. Enlarge partner community radios' network. Rediffuse features on UNMIL radio 1 hour SW coverage Enhance website content: daily update of news stories and audio files.</p> <p>OUTPUT 3: An increased number of partner radios and other media stakeholders share and enforce the principles of STAR radio Code of Ethics, Radio Charter and Editorial Guidelines.</p> <p><u>Activities to promote values and ethics:</u></p> <p>Apply best practices and standards in the radio.</p> <p>Disseminate professional values at meetings and debates on self-regulatory codes and rules. Contribute to the regulatory debate by providing air time to these issues. Organise and/or contribute to seminars and workshops on best practices.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - FM transmitters operate effectively - One-half hour SW programming is produced and broadcast - Program content enrichment - Collaboration with Liberian Broadcasting System - STAR charter and code of conducts printed and posted in all community radio partner studios - STAR radio is invited to meetings and workshops organized by the various STAR media associations - Number of programs addressing media issues in 2007 - Regular exchanges with the relevant government entities

Project Structure	Indicators
<p>OUTPUT 4</p> <p>a) The network of partners of STAR radio is enlarged and allows for better synergies, wider outreach and income generation</p> <p>b) STAR provides training services to Sierra Leonean journalists and technicians, generating a flow of revenues throughout the year</p> <p>c) STAR provides training services to community radios in Liberia, extending outreach and generating income</p> <p>c) A comprehensive business plan provides realistic data, foreseen expenditures and incomes for the next 3 years</p> <p><u>Activities to create a network of partners:</u> Develop synergies, co-production and special programming Implement radio archival database and share programmes Submit targeted proposals to international organizations, government ministries and government commissions</p> <p><u>Activities to provide services to Sierra Leonean journalists and technicians</u> On site training in Freetown at Fourah Bay College/Studio Salone by STAR senior editors and technicians Internships at STAR radio by groups of 10 journalist/trainees from Fourah Bay College/Studio Salone Hands-on training for community radio stations in Sierra Leone</p> <p><u>Activities to provide services to community radio stations</u> Training missions to community radio stations by STAR senior editors and technicians</p> <p><u>Activities to increase financial viability:</u> Create sales and marketing operational plan including clear designation of tasks among staff members; continue training in sales and marketing; Improve on local capacity for proposal development; develop a two-year business plan; increase Board outreach activities to local business community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Program based proposals to Concession Commission, TRC, and other government bodies -Program based proposals to FAO, UNHCR, and other international organizations - Participate in FH-SL and Winterthur-University of Liberia media projects - Archives fully functioning at station - On-line programming on website - Technical training done - Continue internships at STAR radio - Complete a pricing plan for fee-for-services - Initiate a Business Plan for approval by Board - Review at each Board meeting, brainstorming and shared information -Board meets regularly and obtains a quorum at meetings

Evaluation and Reporting

The project will be monitored internally by STAR radio management. This monitoring will enable the identification and correction of potential weaknesses in the project strategy according performance indicators in relation to the objectives and indicators. An evaluation of the financial situation will be provided by a year-end final audit of financial reports by an independent auditor. Evaluation will be enhanced because STAR has been chosen to be a reference radio for an applied media project with the Department of Mass Communications, University of Liberia, and the Zurich University of Applied Sciences Winterthur. Expected research results that provide data, knowledge and insights on the quality of media in the context of democratization in a low income country.