



SOUTH KIVU WOMEN'S MEDIA ASSOCIATION (AFEM)

INTRODUCTION

AFEM works for the advancement of Congolese women through available media outlets and fights for quantitative and qualitative gender parity in all areas of public life. AFEM works with journalists and community radio clubs throughout South Kivu province in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. The South Kivu Women's Media Association is a group of 42 women media professionals in Bukavu.

AFEM specializes in the production of rural and urban radio shows with a large focus on women who are members of radio clubs or who are in positions of local social activism. AFEM partners with other press organizations that facilitate magazine circulation and news broadcasts. AFEM currently works with 350 women who are organized into community radio clubs. These clubs meet to discuss issues that they then produce into radio emissions covering a variety of topics. Each club is made up of approximately 50 women.

BACKGROUND

Coming out of more than a decade of war, the Democratic Republic of Congo is slowly rebuilding the atmosphere for a free press. Though for the most part, journalists have the freedom to cover whichever topic they wish, there are still taboo political subjects that can only be touched with severe consequences. Since 2007, three journalists in South Kivu were murdered after speaking out against corrupt practices within the government.

In addition, women journalists face an uphill battle as they not only have to fight against limited freedom of speech but they also must face attitudes towards women in the media. The work of women journalists is not taken as seriously as men and they do not have the same access to professional development. Attitudes about gender roles severely affect women journalists in the workplace and oftentimes prevent them from advancement.

AFEM aims to create open doors for the advancement of freedom of press through working with community radio groups in order to get rural populations involved in media, therefore increasing the number of voices heard through the media. By giving a voice to rural populations about the issues they face as well as educating these populations about their rights, civic duties, and the Congolese

constitution and laws, AFEM creates a stronger civil society that can support journalists.

AFEM also works for the professional advancement of women journalists by offering technical training and workshops. The organization plans to expand to hosting conferences on the role of women in the media and how women can have access to better education in journalism and media production.

AFEM PROGRAMS

Women participating in AFEM clubs receive training in broadcast and editing that enables them to produce 30-minute radio emissions. AFEM works with FM radio stations in rural areas, as well as in Bukavu, to broadcast the emissions on the air. On average, AFEM puts 12 radio broadcasts on the air each week, 8 that originate from rural areas and 4 that originate from Bukavu. Each emission runs one time during the week. The monthly cost for putting all these radio emissions on the air is approximately \$2400 USD. The broadcasts can be heard in North Kivu, South Kivu, and into Rwanda and Burundi.

The subject matter of the programs focuses on a broad range of topics, including good governance, sexual violence, and human rights. AFEM also distributes radios to women in rural areas.

AFEM is carrying out or has completed the following projects:

- "Education for rural women in law and good governance."
- "Reporting on gender, good governance and sexual violence in Kalehe, Uvira and Walungu territories."
- "Reporting on sexual violence in Walungu, Kabere and Uvira territories."
- Campaign "Resist silence: The media against sexual violence."
- "Radio production as part of 16 days of protest against sexual violence."
- "Awareness campaign for rural women on the importance of local elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo."
- "Work exchange between Rwandan and Congolese women in the media."
- "Awareness campaign for rural women on the democratic process in the Democratic Republic of Congo."

PROJECT

AFEM aims to develop two main objectives in 2010:

1. Increase the professional capacity of women journalists and produce more radio broadcasts through community participation. AFEM firmly believes that women journalists are at a huge disadvantage in terms of their opportunities to access quality training and education in journalism. Therefore, AFEM will establish a series of trainings for female journalists in South Kivu and several trainings integrating female journalists from North and South Kivu.
2. AFEM will develop their work with radio clubs, giving groups more capacity and training to create broadcasts on the radio each week. This involves more equipment, training and personnel.