

ESSPIN
Experiences

**Telling stories:
school improvement
in the media**



esspin
Education Sector
Support Programme
in Nigeria



UKaid
from the Department for
International Development

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From the outset, an effective communications and knowledge management (C&KM) strategy was recognised as intrinsic to the UKaid Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN). The programme offers an integrated approach to school improvement in the basic education sector in Nigeria. C&KM are critical to support the delivery of ESSPIN's outputs – **better managed schools with competent teachers and an improved learning environment, stronger community engagement and 'voice'¹ in school improvement, and better planning, budgeting and management of basic education at all levels of government.**

C&KM has a vital role to play in **raising issues, promoting solutions and explaining the rights, roles and responsibilities of community, civil society and government stakeholders.**

ESSPIN and its programme partners need a dialogue with diverse audiences at all levels of the sector to ensure the flow of relevant information to drive the supply of and demand for improved education services. Effectively engaging communities with those responsible for state education and encouraging a responsive audience to 'voice' concerns is essential for accountability and good governance.

Below
Informed communities are more able to engage with education reform.

Right
School improvement first requires public awareness of what is wrong with Nigeria's schools.



This paper considers how, by working with different media, ESSPIN is helping to create a critical mass of informed advocates willing to push for systemic change from inside and outside the Nigerian education sector. This increases pressure for funding to flow to schools, for comprehensive improvements in the delivery of quality education and for greater community participation in the management of schools. Ultimately, in the progression from information and awareness-raising to public mobilisation and engagement, ESSPIN and its media partners provide a spur to action and seek a public response. In the long term this will lead to behavioural change and institutional development for better basic education in Nigeria.



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Simply put, ESSPIN’s communications strategy is all about getting information in and information out. But what information or messages, to whom, how and why?

See ESSPIN
Experience papers on
school improvement,
school-based
management and
medium-term sector
strategies.

Messages

An early priority was to publicise the programme itself but ESSPIN's communications quickly became focused on what the programme offered to partners and other stakeholders. The main areas for ESSPIN messaging were soon apparent – to put performing schools at the heart of the education sector reform agenda, to prompt community members to be more involved in the management of their schools, and to improve government systems for policy, planning and funding for basic education². Along with the importance of 'inclusive education', to ensure education for all Nigeria's children, these were to become the pillars of ESSPIN's School Improvement Programme (SIP). They were therefore the areas where behaviour change was necessary.

Simultaneously with disseminating technical knowledge, it was important to gather information and report on the situation on the ground to provide the necessary programme context. It soon became possible to show evidence of ESSPIN's impact and (without hiding the continuing challenges) the real progress being made – increasingly with state partners' own resources. Positive results were fed back into media work to offer examples of best practice and lessons to encourage further efforts.



Above
ESSPIN films
captured community
activism across
Nigeria – here on
the Lagos coast.

Right
Significant
improvements in
teaching and learning
outcomes are part of
the story to be told.



Audiences

ESSPIN's audiences for the key messages are many and diverse. Firstly, those with a direct interest or involvement in schools — children, their parents, other community members, and those with an immediate responsibility for delivering basic education. Secondly, the politicians and opinion leaders in government and civil society who have power to influence the success of the reform agenda. ESSPIN's challenge has been to help bring power to those with a direct interest and create interest in those with the power.

Securing stronger 'voice' on the demand side and greater accountability on the supply side of the education sector are higher governance objectives of ESSPIN. Advocacy and political engagement have always been fundamental to ESSPIN's communications work. This extends to an international, notably UK, audience — especially in a time of economic recession coinciding with protected and increasing aid budgets.

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Media

ESSPIN needs to reach large, geographically spread, and socially, politically and economically diverse audiences with messages about school improvement. Some sections of the population have access to various media, but there are many circumstances limit how they receive information.

Different media have the potential to communicate to different segments of this huge audience so ESSPIN adopted a mixed mass media strategy to secure the widest possible coverage. Film/TV, the press, community theatre and radio drama were deployed to get messages out and involve stakeholders in local, regional and national discussions about better schools.

ESSPIN conducted a competitive selection process to find the right media partners and to secure the best value for money. If possible ESSPIN selected Nigerian media partners to support the development of local media capacity – and avoid higher international production costs. The pay-back has been the need to invest more in supporting production, especially in the areas of research, writing and project management.

Programme issues

Understanding C&KM

It has often been necessary to explain where C&KM fits in to ESSPIN and what it offers. The cross-cutting nature of the communications work exacerbates this problem as there is no distinct ‘home’ for C&KM. A glance across ESSPIN’s logical framework and results monitoring table reveals the potential scale and scope of C&KM activities in all output workstreams. Nonetheless, budgets and staffing have been regularly reviewed and reduced.

The resources required to produce good quality communications materials is not always understood. More is involved behind the scenes than turning up with a camera, a microphone, a group of actors or a journalist’s notepad.

Right
ESSPIN’s communications work has benefited from the expertise of some of Nigeria’s finest media practitioners.



Working with government partners

C&KM work, like other programme activities, is about finding sustainable solutions to problems and demonstrating processes that partners can continue to roll out after ESSPIN has finished. Early attempts to do this were centred on the ad hoc and disparate state ministry of education communication committees that were inherited from the Capacity for Universal Basic Education (CUBE) programme.

Instead, ESSPIN linked its C&KM work to state universal basic education boards' (SUBEBs) social mobilisation departments (SMDs). Here, by definition, there was a clear communications function and an established role in community engagement already tied in to ESSPIN's promotion of school-based management. Bringing social mobilisation officers (SMOs) into ESSPIN C&KM planning and activities shows them the how and why of communications practice and develops SMDs' own C&KM capacity.

Right

Good communications and knowledge management are essential for social mobilisation with government and CSO partners at community level.



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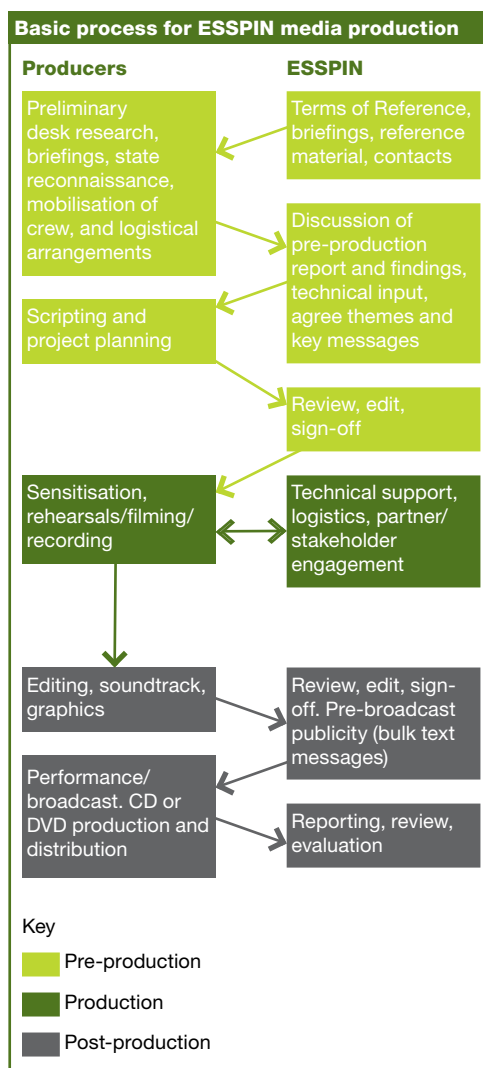
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Radio, film, the press and community theatre have all carried ESSPIN's messages about school improvement to people across Nigeria.

The use of various mass media allows ESSPIN to reach across the social, cultural, economic and political spectrum, and a wide geographic area, with a range of messages to inform and mobilise stakeholders.

Research indicates considerable variation in the take-up of different media in Nigeria in terms of audience size and type. Radio captures a wide audience, often otherwise unreachable, which is mobilised to engage with schools mainly at community level. Those receiving information and sensitised by TV and the press are relatively few, but drawn more from the wealthy and educated ‘movers and shakers’ of the elite in a better position to influence policy. Community theatre reaches a yet smaller audience but it is adaptable to very local contexts, and directly and immediately engages audiences in debate about what is happening to schools in their communities.



ESSPIN and its media partners have adopted a common collaborative approach to production

3

Gbagan Gbagan is the familiar sound of a school bell in Nigeria. In the Hausa translation it is Galan Galan.

'Producing 'Gbagan-Gbagan', ESSPIN's radio drama about the challenges and reforms around basic education in Nigeria, has been a professionally rewarding experience. The effect of the Gbagan-Gbagan experience on the audience was also imbibed by the team.'
Chidi Ukwu, Chief Executive, Flint Productions

Radio drama

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Radio has been the central plank of ESSPIN's media platform, with a significantly larger and more widespread audience than other media. ESSPIN's radio outputs increasingly reached the most disadvantaged and excluded people, notably poor rural women. Radio serves to inform and entertain a remote population, who have low levels of literacy and a largely non-reading culture.

Between early 2010 and mid 2012, ESSPIN produced and broadcast four series of an almost continuously running, weekly 30 minute radio drama titled 'Gbagan-Gbagan – the bell is calling you!'³ The drama was broadcast nationally in pidgin on state and independent radio, and in local languages in the north and south. The bell brought people closer to their radios, it sounded the alarm about the state of the nation's schools and it called children to better schools.

By entertaining people with life-like characters and storylines, the audience was engaged and came back for more. ESSPIN developed the story of school improvement which ran through the drama and kept up a steady flow of relevant messaging.

Different themes or elements of the school improvement programme were emphasised each series. It particularly encouraged community engagement at the school level, notably through school-based management committees (SBMCs), and also raised broader governance and quality issues. Progress in the real world was reflected in the imaginary community of Tikomi.

Each series ended with a 'town-hall' style participatory discussion the themes it raised with a live and participating audience in one of the ESSPIN states.

Flint Productions was selected as ESSPIN's radio partner. The production process started with a period of desk research and discussions with ESSPIN specialists to gain an understanding of the basic education issues, challenges and proposed solutions – what was to emerge as the school improvement package. ESSPIN specialists joined script writers for the first series to contribute their expertise and understanding of the real situation to the imaginary world that is being created.

**Gbagan!
Gbagan!** Radio Nigeria
Saturdays 10.30am
– the bell is calling you!

Much of the airtime was devoted to exciting storylines about peoples' relationships, criminal or other dubious activity, and local politics – far more interesting than a dirge on the state of basic education. But in among the bangs and bust-ups there were children, teachers, parents and other community members who were dealing with major issues in schools. Teacher quality, school facilities, community engagement, education for all children and the use and abuse of power and money by those responsible for delivering education services all featured as central themes.

Scripts were approved by ESSPIN before recording began and this often meant a period of negotiation over story lines and content to ensure messages were included and correct and that risks to UKaid and ESSPIN were minimised. There was also some contribution to the overall creative process. The production cast and crew, including some of the best of Nigeria's best acting talent and technical expertise, then worked on set and in the studio to produce high-quality radio.

All recordings were checked and agreed by ESSPIN before broadcast. The independent national broadcasts were delayed a series behind the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) broadcasts. This was initially thought to be a problem but actually worked well to reinforce messages. Pre-broadcast publicity included the use of bulk text messaging to ESSPIN's stakeholders.

Broadcast arrangements were left in the hands of the radio producers. This was to secure better deals on the broadcast costs and made the producers contractually responsible for getting the drama heard. In the latter part of ESSPIN, contracting the broadcast of series repeats was taken over by ESSPIN and there were further negotiations to offset rising fees.

Having to pay to broadcast some of the best material available on radio, which cost the broadcasters nothing to produce, was a constant irritation, especially as 'Gbagan-Gbagan' started to become more popular and its Saturday morning slot more lucrative for advertising. This alternative funding could have kept the show on air and the production team and broadcasters doing good business. It might have offered a sustainable exit strategy for ESSPIN, but this did not work out and the opportunity was missed to grow a radio market for quality radio programming that attracted bigger business than broadcast fees. Increasing broadcast fees contributed to the premature end of 'Gbagan-Gbagan'.

Right

Radio is the medium for the masses. On-air dramas keep people tuned in.



'I really enjoyed producing these films with ESSPIN. Finding the important stories in education, stories that can inspire others, was exciting and challenging. ESSPIN was also dynamic and open to new ideas.'
Chris Morgan,
Producer/Director,
Straightline Films

Film

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In presenting a strong visual context, film raises public awareness and more responsible engagement with education issues. Film helps provide eye-witness testimony to inform public opinion and promote the formulation of evidence-based education policy.

'Better Schools, Better Nigeria'

ESSPIN's first documentary film project in 2009–10, entitled 'Better Schools, Better Nigeria', was undertaken in close collaboration with the five partner state ministries of education. It served as a video baseline for ESSPIN. While not hiding the grim realities of basic education in the states, it was a deliberate attempt to present an inspiring picture of potential and progress.

The film covered state partners' early work with ESSPIN to improve teaching and school management through the development of the state school improvement teams and school-based Management committees (SBMCs) was showcased. Important governance issues around developing education sector strategies and budgets were covered.

The production process started with desk research by the production company, Straightline Films, and briefings with ESSPIN communications and other technical staff. Preliminary visits to meet ESSPIN's state teams and education stakeholders determined key themes for each state, individuals to be interviewed and locations for filming. A draft shooting script was prepared and a pre-production report covering the proposed themes was shared with the state stakeholders before filming began.



Left and below
ESSPIN film-makers showed it as it is in Nigeria's schools and allowed state governments to outline their reform agenda. Schools and communities provided video testimony of the progress being made.



'Working with ESSPIN has been enlightening. The ESSPIN C&KM specialists all understand the requirements of film production. They made access to film characters and locations easy. I learnt a lot about developmental video production. We at VFM are grateful to ESSPIN for promoting Nigerian talent.'
Akinkugbe Okikiola,
Visual Flow Media

The week of intensive filming in each state was demanding but fairly straightforward. Perhaps the hardest and longest graft came afterwards in the editing suite when the footage from the states was cut, the script rewritten and voiced, and the sound and graphics added. A rough cut was taken back to the states for screening to key stakeholders. Further fine editing then ensued. Close consultation throughout between ESSPIN and the production team ensured the final product fairly represented the programme and its partners.

A 15 minute 'Better Schools, Better Nigeria' (BSBN) film was produced for each of the five original ESSPIN states. 6 minute versions were made for broadcasting within popular breakfast magazine shows and on the internet. The short state films were also available in Hausa and Yoruba, as appropriate. A 30 minute film using the same material but with a more thematic view across the states was also produced.

The different versions of the films were shown on national state and independent TV. Pre-broadcast publicity included the use of on-screen announcements ('track-ups') and bulk text messaging to ESSPIN's stakeholders. The films were mass-produced on DVD and widely distributed to education stakeholders in Nigeria and internationally. Editable versions of the film stock were provided to UKaid.

TV 'spots'

ESSPIN's high-level advocacy in support of political engagement and replication of good practice was enhanced by the production of six low-budget, 30 second TV 'spots', two of which were aired each day in the weeks preceding the 2011 elections.

'Nigerian Futures'

The next stage in the video documentation of ESSPIN's School Improvement Programme (SIP) was 'Nigerian Futures'. This was significantly different in approach to BSBN. ESSPIN worked with an all-Nigerian production team, Visual Flow Media, who had made the TV spots (and included key personnel from BSBN).

The new films were more striking by focusing on ordinary people to tell the results being achieved and the further efforts and investment required to secure a better future for Nigeria's children. The aim was to capture the evident impact of the SIP through the voices of those most directly involved – children, parents, teachers and community members.

Visual Flow Media followed the established process of research, state reconnaissance, filming, scripting, editing and broadcast/DVD production. ESSPIN supported the writing and editing process to ensure that content and messages were appropriate, to provide guidance on the expectations of an international development partner, and quality assure the final output. A close, collaborative relationship with Visual Flow Media contributed to the acclaimed final output.

Learning from BSBN, the now six ESSPIN state films were 5 minutes in length, to offer greater versatility in broadcast schedules, and again available as local language translations. A 30 minute edit looked at the integrated approach to school improvement across the states. Both short and long films were broadcast on national TV stations (notably including morning and evening on Independence Day 2012) and made available to programme partners on DVD.



Left
Film provides a powerful tool for advocacy and political engagement.

'Event reporting has dominated most media reports in Nigeria with voices of the voiceless hardly heard. However the JDP emphasised issue-focused reporting and created understanding of the challenges of the education sector.'
Akinlabi Jimoh,
Programme Director,
Development Communications
Network

The press and other journalists

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Political control and 'brown envelope' payments for stories to appear are cultural norms in the Nigerian media. The corollary is that some newspaper correspondents don't need to write if they can rely on a steady stream of press releases by public bodies, or think pieces from political opinion makers.

ESSPIN is working with Nigerian journalists from the press and other media to improve the quantity and quality of reporting on education in order to build civil society demand for improvement. The aim is to generate column inches in the daily papers for the literate, influential and powerful to read and respond to. This is why ESSPIN supported two journalism development programmes (JDPs) of awareness-raising and skills development.

JDPs open up an important and wide-reaching communication channel for messages about school improvement. By working with journalists as partners, ESSPIN seeks to tell the story of what is happening in schools and communities, and how government can better manage basic education. Those stories have greater validity if they are not ESSPIN's stories, but belong to journalists who understand the responsibilities of their independent role and have the capacity to investigate the truth and write from the evidence before them.

ESSPIN's partners, Development Communications Network, promoted the concept of 'immersion reporting'. Immersion reporting is about establishing relationships with the people whose story is being told. It details the individual's experience from a deeply personal perspective which helps to evoke how people live and what they value. This is designed to make readers feel part of the event being reported.

Right and below

The JDP helped journalists to find out for themselves what was really going on in schools and to cover the real-life stories of teachers, pupils and their parents.



'We were able to stimulate them to write investigative and impactful reports. We exposed them to the decay in schools through field trips. A high volume of educational reports were produced and journalists developed skills and interest in education reporting.'
Akinlabi Jimoh

Realistically, ESSPIN understands that journalists work within editorial and proprietorial constraints, that they have to sell papers, and that ESSPIN cannot dictate what they write. But ESSPIN is trying to bring the journalists closer to the true story of education in Nigeria, the successes as well as the failures, and to be willing and able to tell it how it is on their own account.

As an extension of this approach, ESSPIN has been instrumental in developing links between journalists and civil society organisations (CSO) at state level. This mutually beneficial relationship helps CSOs to make community voices heard and provides journalists with access to the real-life stories about basic education.

The JDPs offered a phased approach to improving press coverage of basic education. Participating journalists progressed to subsequent stages on the basis of their potential and output. An initial desk review of education reporting helped identify likely candidates. Sensitisation days in each of the ESSPIN states brought more than 20 invited journalists together to learn about the JDP and to be introduced to key issues relating to school improvement.

ESSPIN thus developed an immediate rapport with about 150 journalists even if they did not progress further. Approximately 10 applicants from each state and Abuja were selected for a week's training programme involving presentations, practical skills development and an investigative field visit to a local school or community. Some 18 journalists (approximately 3 from each state) went on as state winners to become 'immersion fellows' for the national level capacity building.

This included a short round of further training in Abuja and then a media mentored project to develop education stories over several months. Finally, an overall winner was selected. Prizes were presented to state and national award winners at a gala event in Abuja. This brought together the cream of Nigeria's education reporters in an atmosphere of celebration and commitment to education reform.

The first JDP ran for a little over a year from August 2010. The second JDP began in mid 2012. It follows a similar pattern but focuses on more local, state-based journalists and establishing contact between them and ESSPIN's government and CSO partners. During the first JDP, 68 authoritative education stories were published or broadcast by the participants. These journalists continue to write on related topics.

Below

Tony Akowe of The Nation, Kaduna Office (left) won the top prize in the JDP and continues to produce powerful pieces on education.



Youth, Adolescence Reflection and Action Centre, has had the opportunity to do projects with several local and international agencies. But the most fulfilling and exciting in recent times is the partnership with ESSPIN.'
Dr Tor Iorapuu,
Executive Director, YARAC.

Community theatre

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Many people in Nigeria are still not connected to modern electronic mass media. A strong tradition of drama and story-telling prevails in Nigerian society. ESSPIN community theatre draws a crowd and raises common issues around the delivery of quality primary education.

Community theatre is live and immediately responsive to the context of the performance. While audiences are inevitably smaller than for other media, drama offers a more memorable event. By engaging communities in the tribulations and triumphs of basic education and bringing them together in discussion of what is going on in their schools, theatre work raises 'voice' and demand for change and encourages community involvement in school-based management.

ESSPIN offered a rare opportunity to present community theatre on a large scale and over a prolonged period, closely linked to government and civil society partners' own social mobilisation work. The drama was not simply a one-off campaign activity or just entertainment, but was produced in synergy with other school improvement activities. This gave it much greater resonance with communities and, in turn, meant it added considerable value in changing public behaviour towards schools and basic education.

Youth, Adolescence Reflection and Action Centre (YARAC) from Jos was our partner for community theatre. The production process began with briefings and desk study and then a preliminary visit to the states to meet stakeholders and identify local drama groups. Working with local actors is a vital element of community theatre, as communication is facilitated through understanding of the local language(s), culture, religion and politics. ESSPIN was fortunate to find some great talent in the states who were personally committed to the education reform process and who became true agents for change.

Below

Theatre got communities responding to the question of 'what has to be done to improve schools?'



'The community theatre is an engaging process and enabling people to have the appropriate spaces to hold conversations in a very sincere, participatory and open manner with community leaders, policy makers, teachers and other relevant stakeholders was simply awesome for many.'
Dr. Tor Iorapuu,
Executive Director, YARAC.

SUBEB SMDs were involved in the theatre tours. ESSPIN aimed to build their understanding of community theatre as a tool for social mobilisation and their capacity to deliver it. Some SMOs even joined the cast! They were especially important in publicising performances.

Once individual state issues had been identified and ESSPIN's SIP understood, the theatre producers returned to the states to work with ESSPIN State Knowledge Management Specialists (KMS), SMOs, and local artists in script writing workshops.

The stories were true to life, entertaining, often funny, but always provocative. The scripts were all reviewed by ESSPIN and often revised before being signed off. Translation for delivery in local languages was essential. The theatre writing was adaptable and, while remaining 'on message', it often changed in response to new ideas or local circumstances.

After scripts were agreed, rehearsals began and were immediately followed by the state tours of 15 days, averaging two performances per day. Advance publicity to inform communities of the theatre's arrival was vital.

Performances were originally intended to be staged in public places, like village squares or motor parks, but it became apparent that this would cause problems with local authorities.

Unless by special request, nearly all performances were held in school grounds and were open to the wider community. This proved useful in making the theatre more accessible to elders, women and others who might not be comfortable in public places. It also meant those who had had no previous contact with a school had a chance to visit it.

The theatre troupes usually drew a crowd of 300 – 500, more or less depending on the pre-publicity, weather, farming activities and other local events. A good cross-section of the local community attended: men, women and children, traditional and religious leaders, some local government and political figures, and importantly those who had no current direct interest in the school.

But they did not just come to watch the show. At the end of each performance the audience suddenly found itself part of the drama as the actors turned to ask them 'What has to be done' to address the issues raised in the play. A lively and often lengthy public debate ensued. People identified with the characters and saw the schools presented in the plays as their own. Sometimes they made pledges of immediate support or action, sometimes they demanded a response from government. Everywhere it went, ESSPIN's community theatre created a stir.

Below

Drama is immediately responsive to the context of the performance and able to spotlight local issues, e.g. girls' education in the north.



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Reliable basic data on Nigerian audiences is difficult to find. Using available survey data, ESSPIN extrapolated estimated total audience figures for the radio and TV broadcasts of its communication products as well as overall newspaper readership. ESSPIN also estimated the average audience for its community theatre.

ESSPIN believes the figures shown in the table below to be reasonably accurate and, if anything, erring on the conservative side.

Medium	Estimated audience
Film/TV	5.5 million
Radio drama	10.5 million
Newspapers (all titles)	6 million
Community theatre	40,000 (total)

In 2011, ESSPIN commissioned its own Communications Impact Study⁴ to determine audience responses to ESSPIN's communications outputs in the ESSPIN supported states. Interviews and focus group discussions provided a guide to whether the media messages were getting through and what people were doing about them.

The study first established audience awareness of the different media outputs. The radio drama had been heard by nearly half of all those randomly sampled, with nearly three quarters of those sampled in Kano claiming to listen to it.

Community theatre (at that time only performed in Kano and Jigawa) had been seen by 40 percent of those sampled.

As expected, film/TV viewing was less widespread, with a fifth of the sample claiming to have seen 'Better Schools, Better Nigeria', though in Lagos this rose to more than half. Given that the films and radio drama were broadcast nationally, not just in the six ESSPIN states, even modest estimates for a total Nigerian audience based on these figures would be impressive.

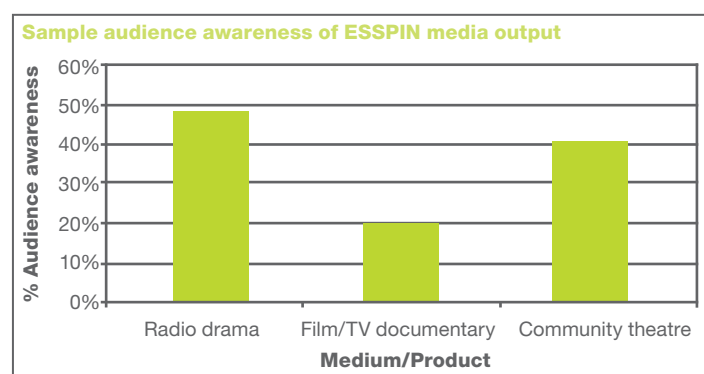
Among the 93 percent of the total sample who had picked up some key messages from ESSPIN's various media activities, ESSPIN measured their actions in response to the message (see table above right).

Reaction	% of audience perceiving messages
Encourage others to send their children to school*	56.8
Send their own children to school	42.1
Speak to others about basic education	33.3
Visit the school	28.6
Support schools with resources	24.6
Speak to local leaders about basic education	20.8
Attend SBMC meetings	17.9
Other	4.2

* ie their own children were already in school

The Communications Impact Study strongly suggested that ESSPIN's communications were getting vital messages across to a wide and diverse audience and that people were acting positively in response to these messages. Other qualitative data validates this and examples are given in the Voices section (see page 20).

The now evident changes in attitude and behaviour cannot be solely attributed to ESSPIN's C&KM work. However, in supporting the delivery of ESSPIN's outputs and the integrated approach to school improvement, these communications are clearly making a significant contribution to ESSPIN's outcomes and eventual impact.



Percentage of sample audience who had heard or seen ESSPIN media output

Voices

Radio

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‘SBMC development has been accelerated because communities heard about SBMCs on ‘Gbagan-Gbagan’ and wanted to get involved.’
OA Adefuye,
Director, SUBEB Social
Mobilisation Department, Lagos

‘I am a regular listener to your radio drama and I always enjoy it. I want to encourage you to continue as the programme is really enlightening the audience on the need for reform in our education sector.’
Tosin Ajiboye,
Osogbo, Osun State

‘What I like is ‘Gbagan-Gbagan’ is very educating and easy to understand any time you listen to it. It talks on children’s education to parents who are still resisting sending their kids to school. And I strongly believe that this programme can soften that mind and understanding about western education.’
Male focus group participant,
Kano

‘Teacher quality as discussed in d episod is vital. Msgs on teacher training n re-training shd be infused continually in d episods to come. Gud work!’
Henry,
Kaduna (by SMS)

‘Gbagan-Gbagan is a good drama programme. I must acknowledge it. It has reshaped people’s mind towards the training of a girl child.’
Igwe Sunday,
Abakaliki, Ebonyi State.

Film

That documentary is a master stroke; I must be honest with you. I was watching it here and somebody came in and asked me 'where is this place?' I told him this is Nigeria. This is the situation of this country.

Reporter, The Guardian, Enugu

What I like about the documentary is that, it has now given us a very good basic knowledge on how we can improve our country; we must develop our education... we must put a lot of resources, not only resources, we must make sure that all resources put are accounted for.

Male Stakeholder, Kaduna North



Above

Nigeria saw the reality of out of school children in a 30 seconds TV 'spot'.

Press and other journalists

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‘The Journalism Development Programme (JDP) has exposed me to certain things which I had no previous knowledge of. It has widened my scope of reportage.

‘The JDP is apt as issue-based and advocacy reporting has been on the lips of my station’s management since last year.’

Cecilia Chinwe Chukwu,
Senior Reporter, Federal Radio
Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN), Enugu.

‘The JDP has been of great impact in my work. Before taking part in the programme, I never really paid special attention to basic education issues. Today when I pass by any primary school I look out for things that can impact positively or negatively on basic education.

‘The awareness in education reporting is increasing. Today papers dedicate pages to education like business and politics. This development arises from the training those of us who are from these media received.’

Tony Akowe,
The Nation, Kaduna

‘JDP came at the right time when the education sector is under-reported and when it is reported, it is done from the government perspective. So for me, the programme succeeded in opening my eyes to certain things that ordinarily I don’t look out for.

‘There are things we see in the education sector that policy makers pretend they don’t see. It is our responsibility to bring it out to them. I now have that skill. The stories I did on school infrastructure in Kaduna State got the required attention. These schools are undergoing renovation right now.’

Anthony Forson,
Nigeria Television Authority,
Kaduna

‘My perspective to reporting has changed. When I go to an assignment and you tell me you are about to roll out a policy, I ask myself the following questions: Who are the people that will benefit from this policy? Are they aware that something like this is going to happen? I take my reporting not from what the government says but how it will impact the lives of Nigerians. For me that is what matters, that you can impact lives with your writings.’

Boco Edet, Daily Trust, Abuja

Community theatre

‘The content of the play ‘Agbajowo’ was not only informative but an efficient and effective means of sensitisation to all stakeholders in education in the selected schools/communities.’

Letter from Lagos SUBEB

‘The story of this play ‘Hannu da Yawa’ is about me. The character, Gagarau, reflects my earlier thoughts about education, especially where girls are concerned. I have since realised I was hurting my children. I have six of my children in this school and I am ready to go at any length to support their education. I am a welder and looking around, I think I can contribute to hanging some of the falling windows.’

Mallam Bala Usman,
Gobirawa Special Primary School,
Fagge Local Government Area,
Kano State

‘I came and watched the drama, it made me see there is no reason why my child should not go to school.’

Nura Usman, Chai Chai, Jigawa

‘This is one of the best dramas I have watched. As usual the community has a catalogue of needs. But it is even more exciting to see the eagerness to engage with the issues the drama raises. This is impressive.’

Barbara Payne, Senior Education
Adviser, UKaid Nigeria

‘This play is a proverb to the entire community. Change came because Agbabiaka dared to challenge a situation he did not like. We all must learn from him.’

Chief Solomon Ishola- (Baale),
Kwara

‘I have never had interest in drama but this one has been an experience. It has been both entertaining and educative. One of the key things I got from the play is the role of the community in the monitoring of government projects in the community.’

Mr Alabi Kadupe, Kwara

‘As a result of the ‘Hannu da Yawa’ drama, so many parents who don’t allow their girl children to go to school are now sending them to school, instead of them wandering about in the community during school hours.’

Female focus group participant,
Kano

‘The drama made a big impact. Some big men in the community were not ready to help the school. They were only interested in their own advancement, but after the play they started to contribute.’

Godwin Ali, SBMC Chairman,
Premier Primary School, Udi,
Enugu

‘In LGEA U/ Bassak, witnesses of the drama returned home and educated others; 10 plastic chairs were donated to the school as a result. In Chori, attendance to SBMC meetings improved and two female drop outs in Chori returned back to school.’

Zinas Zugu, SUBEB SMD Desk
Officer, Kauru, Kaduna

‘Some communities are very religious and see education as an obstacle to their religion and encouraging moral decline – with the youth rejecting religion. After the drama, education is now seen as helping bring people together — children support parents, and it helps business, helps farming.’

Balarebe Yusuf, SMD, Jigawa

‘Previous efforts to enrol children by going house-to-house had had little success but the drama made people come directly to the school to enrol pupils in Class 1 – many people understood the message of the drama.’

Alhaji Yaumuhammad,
Village Head, Kwachirin Jobe, Jigawa

‘After the drama we noticed it was much easier for us to get people to do what we wanted them to do to develop the school. Attendance at meetings was significantly higher.’

Igwe (King) Prof Kenneth Onyia,
Nsude, Enugu

Section 4: Lessons

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Entertaining audiences has never overridden the political and social purpose of ESSPIN’s work with the media to secure behaviour change. Our media partners need managing throughout the production process to ensure we keep ‘on-message’.

Production learning

Some issues raised by ESSPIN's media outputs are extremely sensitive in Nigeria. ESSPIN needs to communicate about good governance and improving education opportunities for all children, but without risking the interests of the programme, partners and other stakeholders with inappropriate or inflammatory content. ESSPIN's communications team must continue to diligently oversee all output.

ESSPIN failed to convince broadcasters to reduce broadcast fees. It needs more direct relationships with broadcasters, ideally pre-production, to encourage joint ownership of communications products for mutual benefit. This approach has already seen some traction, securing discounts on repeats. Corporate social responsibility is worth exploring with media houses that are mindful of their reputations. Working with other development programmes can also help.

A combination of production company operational difficulties and increasing broadcast fees led to the untimely demise of the 'Gbagan-Gbagan' radio drama. With the prospect of discounts for repeat broadcasts, it could be possible to air the still relevant four series of 'Gbagan-Gbagan' again.

ESSPIN's community theatre has shown the enduring power of its performances and the quality of the responses from its audiences. Initially more experimental than other media, the theatre has shown great value and exceeded expectations in promoting community engagement and supporting school improvement. Further theatre production is a must.

Filming the plays for broadcast and DVD for widespread distribution has been requested in all states. The drama needs to be properly adapted for the screen and shot on location as a bona fide video production, combining the creative talent of the dramatists with the technical expertise of the film makers. DVD showings and post-performance discussions in communities would then allow far greater and continuous coverage at a fraction of the cost of touring theatre.

Programme learning

Media engagement, as part of a sound communications strategy, is better understood and firmly embedded in ESSPIN's integrated approach to school improvement. It is critical for advocacy and political engagement with civil society and government. More proactive investment and support for established communications projects from across the ESSPIN work-streams would mark a further shift from justification, to acceptance, to endorsement of the power of the media in achieving development goals.

ESSPIN's ongoing capacity building for its Nigerian partners includes managing the production process and raising awareness of the expectations of an international development programme. ESSPIN should improve partner understanding of its operational requirements (contract conditions, accounting and reporting procedures) and expedite documentation and payments.

SUBEB SMDs must be further involved in ESSPIN's communications work. Developing their understanding and management of media production is a priority for ESSPIN's principal partners in community engagement and advocacy. This requires ESSPIN's ongoing investment in joint projects and greater commitment of state resources through education sector strategies and budgets. This would enable ESSPIN's investment in the power of the media to mobilise to be sustained in a way that leaves more than a legacy of past productions.

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ESSPIN's experience of working with the media has proven challenging, sometimes innovative, often rewarding; and hopefully also inspiring. ESSPIN has given considerable support to media producers and has in return received high levels of commitment and high-quality output, often exceeding expectations.

As in so much development work, the key to the relationship has been to work in partnership rather than to use the media simply as service providers. This joined-up approach is typical of ESSPIN.

Just as school improvement is integrated across ESSPIN and C&KM is embedded within the output work streams, so ESSPIN's mixed media communications have benefited from, and enhanced, the vibrancy of other technical assistance provided to communities, schools and government and civil society organisations. This ensures that knowledge is managed, communicated and enriched.

ESSPIN's media partners have demonstrated their value in implementing broad advocacy and political engagement strategies from the outset. No development programme can afford to ignore the power of the media if it is serious about raising awareness of important issues and seeks to create the necessary demand for social and institutional development.

ESSPIN's mixed media approach reaches across society to reflect on what must be done and to rouse the critical mass of change agents necessary to make better schools and a better Nigeria.

**‘Hannu da Yawa’:
mobilising communities
through theatre**

‘After the drama, I knew I had no more excuse for not sending my children to school.’

These were the words of Muhammadu Mai Tandu, from Bakin Ruwa community in Dutse Local Government Area of Jigawa State and the father of two boys and three girls who are now all pupils of Bakin Ruwa Primary School. He was commenting on the impact of ‘Hannu da Yawa’, an ESSPIN community theatre production he had watched at the school a year earlier.

‘I had only two children in this school before, but now I have all my five children in the school. The drama made me realise that education is the only legacy I can give them. I did not have any formal education myself and will not want my children to end up like me,’ Muhammadu added.

‘Hannu da Yawa’, meaning ‘joining hands together’, was staged to sensitise Jigawa communities to key education issues in the state, especially the importance of girls’ education. Community theatre has been presented by ESSPIN in Jigawa and five other ESSPIN-supported states and watched by more than 40,000 people.

The live theatre performances and the subsequent audience discussions bring whole communities together in a personal and memorable event that highlights the importance of education. Audiences consider what is happening in their schools and have the opportunity to raise their voices in demanding better basic education. But they are also alerted to the possibilities of taking responsibility, as a community, for supporting local school-based management.

The commitment and contributions to school improvement in response to the theatre have often been dramatic and sustained. ESSPIN’s community theatre production is linked to other social mobilisation work by government and civil society partners.

‘I am not the only man in Bakin Ruwa who responded to the drama. My friends have now started sending their children to school as well. I hope the play will be performed again soon so that those who missed the first one can see it as well,’ Muhammadu commented.

ESSPIN works in Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Kwara, Enugu and Lagos states to improve teaching and management skills in schools, and the governance of education at federal, state and community level.

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