Interactive Radio and Television Debates in Mozambique

AWEPA entered into a Strategic Partnership with the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and NIMD, in order to strengthen the lobby and advocacy capacities of political actors in a number of African countries. Last year, AWEPA has kicked off a new project in Mozambique which raises awareness to peace and governance issues through interactive radio and television debates.

Working with selected community radio and television stations, AWEPA ran phone-in discussion programmes that provided an opportunity for citizens to engage in debates on thematic issues related to the political and economic concerns with MPs and members of provincial and municipal assemblies as well as civil society representations. Support for this programme included workshops for journalists at national and provincial levels.

In this project AWEPA partnered with the Youth Association for Community Development in Mozambique (Associação Juvenil para o Desenvolvimento Comunitário em Moçambique, AJUCOM) to train journalists and theatre actors on promoting amongst citizens active participation in political debates. The trainings took place in Manhiça and Magude districts, Maputo province. Journalists from two community radio stations were targeted, namely: Rádio comunitária de Xinanvane and Rádio comunitária de Magude. In total 100 journalists were trained and 21 actors. The attendees of the debates included local leaders and community members among which students and representatives of the government institutions at local level.

As a follow-up to the trainings two community radio debates are now being broadcasted once a week, in which citizens are invited to interact with the politicians through the open and free phone lines.

Besides that, AWEPA provides equipment (radio tapes, microphones) which the community radios can use in their daily work.

The journalists have been organising radio debates on various topics of concern:

- Peace and reconciliation. Here participants urged the FRELIMO government and RENAMO to meet a consensus soonerest. “Stop the war please! We want to go back to our farms and produce food. Our children are dying either by war or anger. You from parliament why are you not doing anything to help?” said a woman that attended one of the radio debates. Hon. Malunga, an MP, answered that parliament is working hard to help, but there are procedures to follow. He urged participants to be patient and vigilant.
• The economic crisis versus the hidden debts. Participants wanted to understand what happened during the past period which led for Mozambique to reach the current decrease of economic prosperity and high level of poverty.

• Functioning of Parliament. Many participants wanted to learn more about how the parliament works and why their representation role is rather weak? Communities wanted to learn more on how they can interact more with the elected people. They also mentioned that they lack the information about laws being approved by parliament. The MPs explained that the parliamentary sessions are actually open to the public. They also informed the participants that citizens can approach the parliament through the Committee of Petitions.

During these sessions, AWEPA together with the AJUCOM learned that local communities are very much aware of the priority developments in the country with regards to all areas of concern. They are eager to get engaged politically but most of the times they lack information and access to the institutions. The turn up of the attendance to the debates was constantly very high, meaning that the people are showing a great interested in democracy and governance processes.