

Listening Project Update: February 2008

Reports from Listening Exercises

Reports from the *Thailand* and *Kosovo* Listening Exercises can be downloaded from our website at www.cdainc.com/cdawww/project_profile.php?pid=LISTEN&pname=Listening%20Project. Translations of these reports will be available soon and all of the past Listening Exercise reports (*Aceh, Indonesia; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Ethiopia, Angola, Bolivia, Zimbabwe, and US Gulf Coast*) can be downloaded there as well. Feel free to pass them on and let us know what you think!

Recent Listening Exercises

Sri Lanka—the Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies (CHA) took the lead role in organizing this Listening Exercise, which took place from *September 24th to October 5th, 2007*. Participating agencies included: CHA; Irish Red Cross; FORUT; Mercy Corps; Oxfam Great Britain, Oxfam America, Sewa Lanka Foundation, and World Vision. Listening teams visited Batticaloa in the East; Galle in the South; Badulla in the central highlands; the border areas around Anuradhapura and Puttalam, and Colombo.

Kenya—Local Capacities for Peace International (LCPI) organized the Listening Exercise in early *October 2007*, with the participation of staff from a number of organizations including: Support for Tropical Initiatives in Poverty Alleviation (STIPA); Veterinaire Sans Frontiers (VSF) - Germany; Konrad Adenauer Foundation; Anglican Church of Kenya Directorate of Social Services and Christian Community Services; Security and Research Information Center (SRIC); Action Africa Help International (AAHI); Seeds of Peace Africa International (SOPA); Peace Tree Network (PTN); Joint Aid Management (JAM); Lutheran World Federation; CEAS; Impact on Health; MYTO; Dakahumas; and the World Health Organization. The listening teams visited communities in Western, Nyanza, Rift Valley and Eastern Provinces; Lokichoggio and the Kakuma refugee camp in the northwest; and Nairobi and surrounding areas.

Cambodia—Oxfam America hosted the Listening Exercise which took place from *November 1-10, 2007*. Staff from several agencies participated including: Oxfam America; Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR); Development and Partnership in Action (DPA); Pour un Sourire d'Enfant (PSE); Action Aid; American Friends Services Committee (AFSC); the Asia Foundation; and Hellen Keller International. The listening teams visited five regions including: Phnom Penh and surrounding areas; Mondulkiri Province in the East; Battambang and Pursat Provinces in the West; and Kampot Province in the South.

Thailand-Burma Border—The Karen Women's Organization and several other local organizations participated in a brief listening exercise in several refugee camps and surrounding communities in northwestern Thailand in *late November*.

The reports from these Listening Exercises are being drafted and reviewed by the listening team members who held the conversations with people in each of the field visits. Once the team members have had an opportunity to provide feedback, the reports will be finalized and translated. CDA will then work with the agencies involved in each place to distribute the reports to other agencies (international and local) and donors who would be interested in the findings. We welcome suggestions on others who might want to read these reports.

External Publications

The Listening Project contributed an article on “**Listening to Improve Accountability**” in the December 2007 edition of the *InterAction Monday Developments Magazine*. It will be available to download at <http://www.interaction.org>.

Plans for 2008

As the Listening Exercise reports are produced from the most recent and additional visits, CDA will produce *Issue Papers* that highlight some of the patterns, themes, lessons and further questions that are emerging from the diversity of places visited so far. In some locations, future Listening Exercises will be linked to *Feedback Workshops* so that these accumulated lessons can be further “tested” in conversations with local people, as well as with international assistance agencies and donors. CDA has found that opening up the conversations to include an even broader range of people in different countries adds a great deal of new insight to lessons learned in the first phase of project activities.

For example, in many places people have talked about the importance of international “presence”, but not everyone agrees on why and how this is important. If we can open up additional conversations by telling people what we have heard in other places, and then asking them what they think based on their experiences, this will add nuance and depth to the ideas that have been raised by many people already. Of course, we will also leave enough space and time for people to raise new issues as well. Using this approach, upcoming Listening Project field visits will gather people for a day or two of “feedback” in which we outline some of these open-ended issues that need more nuance. Then, those who can will go out to do further conversations on these and other issues.

A *Listening Exercise* will be held in **Ecuador** from February 25th – March 4th, hosted by Catholic Relief Services. Other places we are exploring carrying out Listening Exercises and/or Feedback Workshops include:

- The Gambia
- Timor Leste
- Afghanistan
- Senegal
- Lebanon
- Guatemala
- Somalia
- The Philippines (focusing on Mindanao)
- Solomon Islands
- Mozambique
- Madagascar
- Armenia

Feedback Workshops may also be held with international assistance agencies and donors in the US, Europe, Australia and other locations depending on time and funding. We plan to have a *Consultation* in mid-late 2008 where people involved in the Listening Exercises and Feedback Workshops will compare and analyze the trends and patterns identified so far. Sometime in 2009, the Listening Project plans to produce a final *publication*, which will include examples of the evidence, the analysis and lessons learned, recommendations and--if they emerge from the evidence--tools for improving international assistance efforts.

The Listening Project is seeking additional funding and support to organize these Listening Exercises and Feedback Workshops, and our plans will depend on the support that we receive. If you are interested in or able to support the Listening Project financially or in any other way, please be in touch.

The Listening Project has benefited enormously so far from financial and in-kind support from many international and local NGOs. In fact, several NGOs have provided more than half of the total project funding to date—and it will be great if this continues through this next phase. The Listening Project has so far been funded by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, International Rescue Committee, Catholic Relief Services, Mercy Corps, Australian Agency for International Development (AusAid), Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.