



# Voices for Peace

## Summary of Listenership Study Findings

**AID-624-A-16-00016**

Prepared by Félix Youl  
And Barrett Browne

*August 2019*



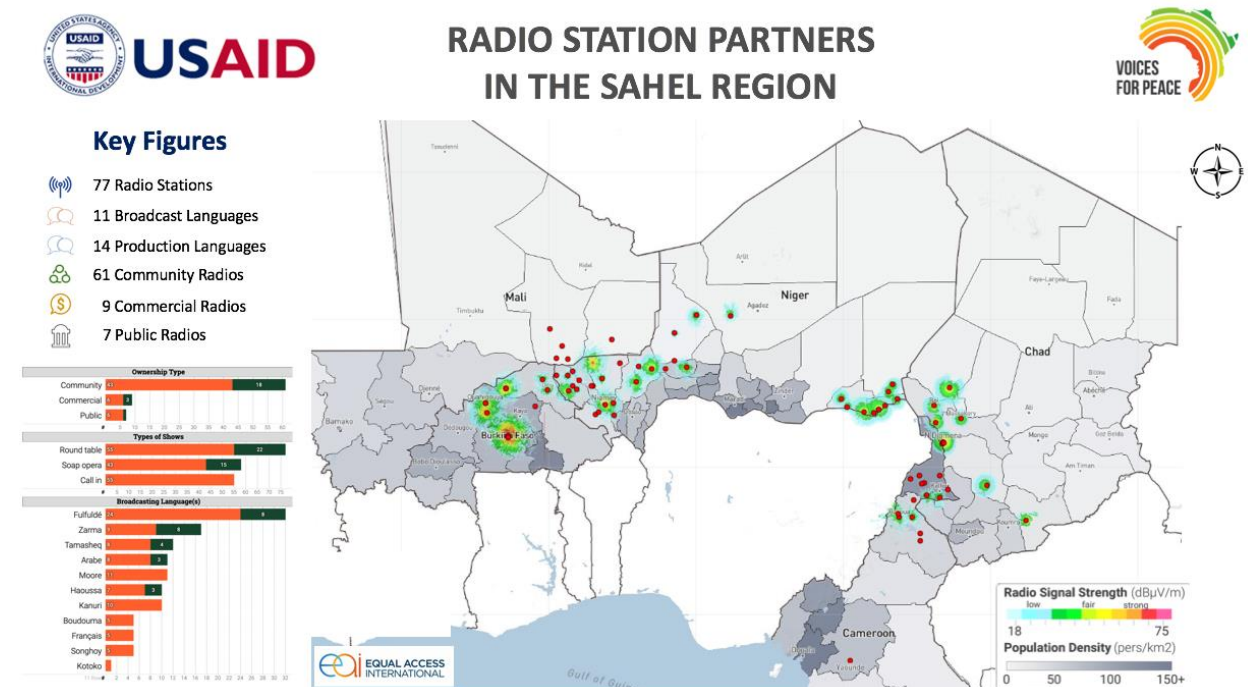
**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**eai** EQUAL ACCESS  
INTERNATIONAL

## Context

**Voices for Peace (V4P)** is a five-year, five country regional partnership with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Launched in 2016 and implemented by Equal Access International (EAI), V4P aims to reduce vulnerability to violent extremism in West Africa through the promotion of democracy, human rights, and good governance. With more than ten armed groups now operating across the Sahel and Lake Chad regions of West Africa, local grievances, cross-border conflicts, and youth radicalization have been bolstered by material and narrative support from al-Qaeda and ISIS.

Rather than counter the rhetoric and narratives of violent extremists, V4P media content, training, and community-driven platforms across the region develop and disseminate indigenous, culturally resonant, alternative narratives that overwhelm divisive media and extremist propaganda. V4P is unique in its regional approach, empowering networks of youth and marginalized communities across borders to mobilize for peace in the Sahel and Lake Chad regions.



A core component of V4P is to establish “priority partnerships” with 53 community and commercial radio stations in Niger, Burkina Faso, Chad, Cameroon, and Mali. These stations reach over 3 million daily listeners and are vital V4P partners that produce and disseminate credible and influential CVE and behavior change radio programming in priority areas. V4P works to strengthen these ‘priority’ stations’ technical and management capacities to produce and broadcast effectively and become more self-sustaining. Additionally, V4P partners with 24 ‘monitoring’ radio partners across the region that disseminate project content. Communities listening through ‘monitoring’ stations were not included in this study but represent an estimated 1 million additional listeners to V4P radio programming.

To date, V4P and its partners have produced and disseminated radio programming in 14 different languages, over 2000 broadcast hours of CVE and behavior change content through a variety of formats, including round tables, variety magazine shows, fictionalized dramas (soap operas), and call-in shows. To measure the reach and evaluate the impact of these programs, V4P conducted a listenership study across

all 5 countries, interviewing more than 14,000 listeners, and assessing the coverage, reach, and influence of V4P programming.

## About the study

The goal of this listenership study was to measure the size and listening habits of the audience of V4P's 53 priority partner radio stations in Niger, Burkina Faso, Chad, Cameroon, and Mali. This goal contained four specific objectives:

- Determine the number of listeners for each of V4P's 53 partner radio stations;
- Identify the means by which people listen – via personal radio, cell phone, vehicle, or in a community setting;
- Determine habits including peak hours by country and average time spent listening per day;
- Assess the level of knowledge and preferences among listeners, including familiarity with programs, preferred types of content, and themes understood and applied.

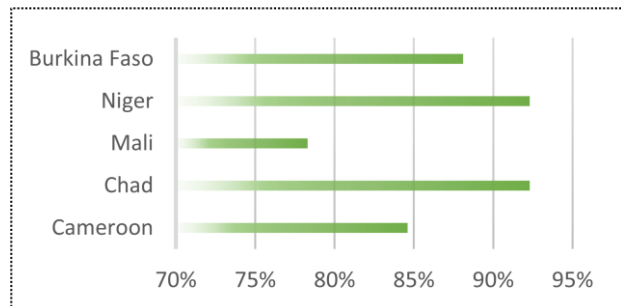
One hundred researchers carried out a door-to-door questionnaire to 14,054 people across the five V4P intervention countries. Interviewees were selected at random from a list of locations based on three criteria: coverage by partner radio, accessibility, and security. Quotas ensured an adequate representation of gender, age, and urban/rural location.

## Who is listening?

**Table 1:** V4P Radio station Listener count

Country	% population with radius who listen (est.)	Number of listeners
<b>Total</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>2,946,718</b>
Burkina Faso	61%	642,720
Niger	78%	1,320,614
Mali	89%	87,804
Chad	66%	515,583
Cameroon	61%	379,997

**Table 2:** Listeners within broadcast zones who are familiar with V4P-produced content



As shown in Table 1 above, a combined 3 million people regularly tune in to V4P priority partner radio stations across the Sahel. This constitutes approximately 69% of people aged 15 years or older living within the broadcast coverage areas<sup>1</sup>. Of those 3 million radio listeners, nearly 90% report familiarity with V4P-produced content. Only in Mali and Cameroon is familiarity below 85%, which can be attributed to the fact that V4P only began programming there in 2018. In the other three countries, familiarity with V4P programming is around 90%.

The breakdown of women versus men who listen to V4P partner stations is roughly equal (51% vs 49%, respectively). The audience is mostly made up of young people, as 62% of radio listeners are under 35

<sup>1</sup> Total population estimates living within broadcast zones are estimated using the latest available statistics from each country's National Institute of Statistics



years old. The vast majority identify as Muslim (85%), followed by Christian (14%). The breakdown by profession includes housekeeper (30%), farmer (20%), trader or merchant (14%), student (10%), and unemployed (8%).

Level of education is also an important demographic measure in V4P audience targeting. The study found that more than one-third of these listeners (36%) have never received formal education, while 20% attended Koranic school. Only a small number (4%) had enrolled in higher education, and most of them are concentrated in national or regional capitals.

Several lessons can be drawn from the demographic data. Radio continues to be the most cost-effective method of reaching large populations, particularly those most vulnerable to violent extremist recruitment and messaging. While other mediums such as TV or social networks offer flashier, interactive, more varied formats for engagement, many of V4P's listeners do not have regular access to them. While V4P's overall strategy does involve supporting social media networks to concentrate advocacy efforts and disseminate alternative narratives, putting too much emphasis on online messaging at the expense of radio programming would risk overlooking V4P's core target beneficiaries. In fact, the study indicates that the average profile of a radio listener matches the profile of many VEO recruits in the region: young, male, Muslim, underemployed, and lacking formal education.

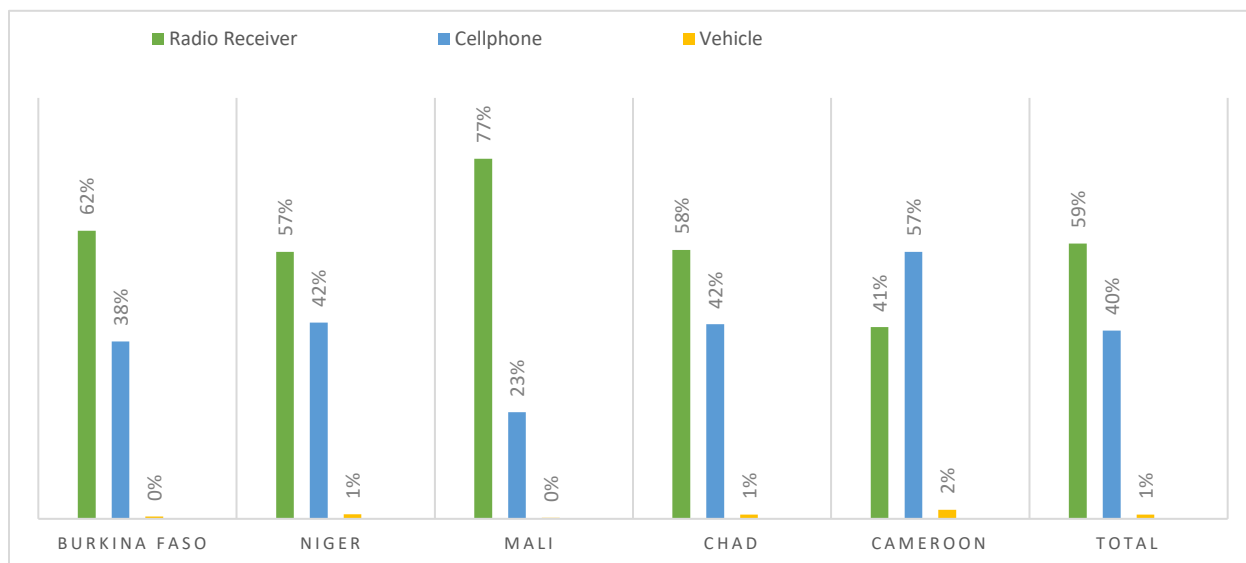
The overall lack of formal education indicates that many listeners are not able to engage as deeply with V4P radio content when it is produced in French, the national language of each V4P country. Translating programs into several local languages not only makes the content more accessible, but also underlines an effort to speak directly to communities that often feel marginalized, increasing the power and relevancy of V4P programming. Messages that speak directly to community-level grievances resonate more than national-level French language campaigns. Based on these findings, partner radio stations should continue to produce roundtables, debates, and other informational programs, and use translators for the regionally produced soap operas, to localize messaging and connect with listeners.

## How are they listening?

As the data on listener professions would suggest, most people listen to partner radio stations at home (92%). Personal radios are the most common means of reception (59%) in every country except Cameroon, where a majority use their cell phones either to capture FM reception or, more commonly, to



**Table 3:** Methods of listening to V4P programming



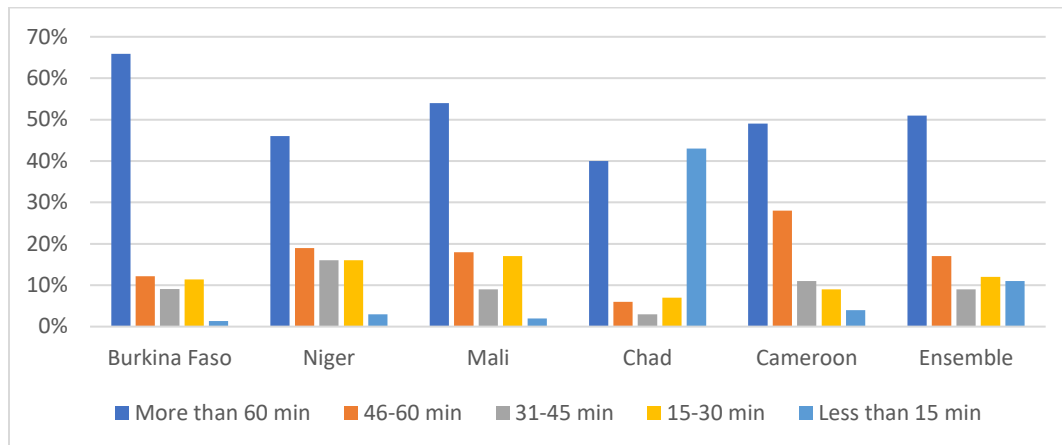
share audio files on SD cards or other formats. Previous anecdotal evidence collected by V4P staff suggests that sharing audio files is a particularly useful way to penetrate hard to reach audiences, such as those already living in or around extremist camps where radio stations cannot safely operate.

About half of the respondents report that they listen with family members or household members, while 14% listen with friends and 36% listen alone. A key outcome of V4P programming – particularly the soap opera series – is to generate discussion among communities about the takeaways and applicable lessons learned from the programming. V4P believes that individuals are far more likely to understand, internalize, and respond to messaging if they can discuss what they hear and share their own relevant experiences. To this end, the program has organized over 1000 Listening, Discussion, and Action Group (LDAG) meetings to kickstart community CVE-relevant discussions and local action based on the media programming they hear together.

The statistics on time spent listening reinforce the idea that radio is uniquely positioned to reach target populations. Table 4 shows that half of those who do listen to the radio spend, on average, more than one hour a day listening. This number holds fairly well across the region – in no country do less than 40% report listening for more than one hour. Overall, only 20% of listeners tune in for 45 minutes or less. This means that V4P can tap into an audience with multiple programs, formats, or speakers around a cohesive theme. Thorough, detailed-focused conversations that bring in a variety of credible voices, while communicating through local languages and appropriate cultural contexts, can build new, positive narratives. Listener input via the popular call-in format and LDAG feedback can further refine and localize these narratives for maximum effect.



**Table 4:** Time spent per day listening to the radio

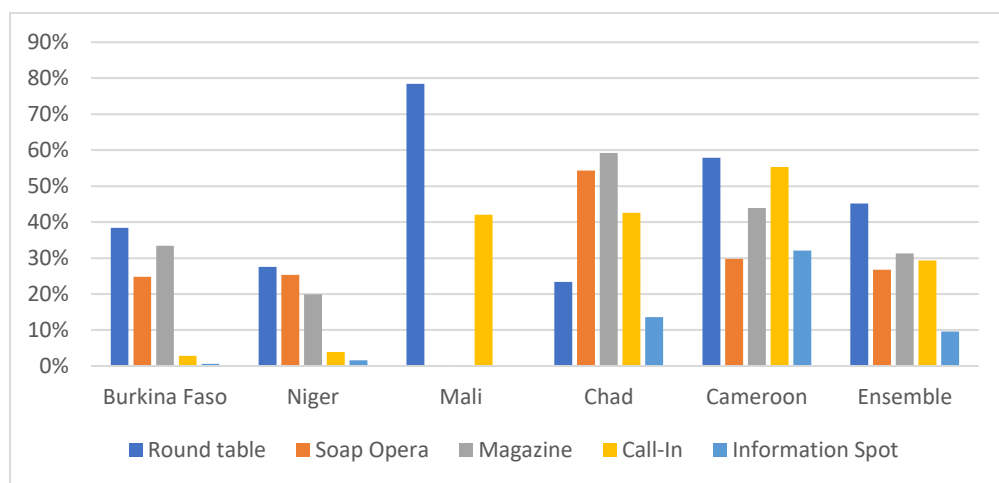


Each country study reveals different peak listening times. In Cameroon and Burkina Faso, the most popular listening times are around 7:00pm-8:30pm, followed by an early morning peak between 6:00am – 9:00am (Cameroon’s listenership also spikes in the late afternoon between 4:00pm-5:00pm, while Burkina Faso’s afternoon peak is smaller, and around 1:00pm). Chad and Mali also have a heavy peak in the evening between 7:00pm-9:00pm, while listenership is much lower throughout the rest of the day. Niger is the most unlike the other countries; with its highest peak occurring between 9:00am-11:00am, a lower but longer second peak between 3:00pm-5:30pm, and a late-night peak between 8:00pm-10:00pm. In Niger and Burkina Faso, Monday is the most popular day for listening while Sunday has the lowest audience; in Cameroon and Chad, Sunday is the most popular day. In Mali, listenership appears to be mostly equal regardless of the day.

### What is working?

Table 5 below shows which program formats listeners say they follow, by country.

**Table 5:**  
Popularity of  
programs





The popularity of different program formats varies greatly by country. In each country except Chad, the roundtable is the most popular format. In Chad, listeners prefer the magazines and soap operas. In each country, the information spots are the least popular format, perhaps because they simply convey information for the public in a direct fashion, rather than through a fictionalized drama like the soap operas or in a more engaging format such as call-ins and round tables.

Not only is the roundtable a popular format, feedback also suggests that its themes are the most well understood. Overall nearly 80% of listeners report at least a “good” understanding of the topics discussed during roundtables, while less than 5% report having only a “weak” or “no” understanding of themes after the program. In addition, just over 70% of all listeners report a “good” comprehension for the soap opera and magazine formats, indicating that these are also effective mediums for communication and retaining information.

## Findings

V4P’s access provides an unparalleled opportunity to shape community-level discussions on CVE-relevant topics. Over two-thirds of the population living within the coverage areas listen to partner radio stations, and this study shows that audiences eagerly consume and engage with the content produced by V4P and partner stations. Reported high levels of comprehension provide evidence that these programs are reinforcing people’s understanding of key issues, personal empowerment, and resilience to violent extremist messaging. Some of V4P’s greatest strengths are also areas to reinforce to make programming even more effective:

- Radio is the most cost-effective medium for reaching large populations, particularly communities with low education levels that are most vulnerable to violent extremist messaging. V4P should continue to invest in local language radio programs.
- Evidence suggests that further diversifying the production languages, taking into account smaller, often marginalized ethnic minorities, can help programming resonate with relevant community topics.
- More effort is needed to work closely with radio station managers and Content Advisory Groups to ensure that programs to be translated contain applicable themes to the local context.
- Radio stations can build their audiences by establishing and publishing regular programming schedules. Efforts should be made to take into account “prime time” hours by country, and consider aligning the most popular program formats with peaks hours. Other factors to consider include locations in which electricity is only available at certain times of the day.
- Take advantage of large blocks of time in which people listen continuously, such as 1.5-2 hour “prime time” windows, to focus multiple programs around complementary themes. For example, it may be worthwhile to schedule a roundtable or call-in immediately after an episode of a soap opera to break down the themes explored by the episode and how they relate to local issues.
- Continue efforts to train radio station staff on best practices in management, production, and advocacy, so that their work can be sustained beyond the life of the project.

For complete results of the study, the full research report is available at [www.equalaccess.org](http://www.equalaccess.org).