

FATA NA GARI and the Changing Face of HIV/AIDS in Kano, Nigeria

A ground-breaking weekly interactive talk show in Hausa language is tackling subjects that have been taboo. *FATA NA GARI* was developed by Saidu Umar Tudunwada, the Assistant General Manager of *Freedom Radio Kano*, after he attended an Internews workshop on how to develop profitable news and public affairs programs.

Talking about HIV and AIDS issues in any conservative Muslim community is considered taboo. Kano is a typical example of such cities in Nigeria. In communities like this, health issues and decisions are taken on behalf of family members by the father, and in his absence by the mother-in-law, not the mother.

Today that is changing. A radio program, *FATA NA GARI* (Better Life), is giving local people — especially women — a voice to join in the public discussions of HIV/AIDS and a place to get information that is critical to their lives. The weekly radio program was introduced by Saidu Umar Tudunwada, Assistant General Manager of *Freedom Radio Kano*, after attending a training workshop for radio station managers, “News and Public Affairs Programs that Sell,” offered by Internews’ *Local Voices* Project.

FATA NA GARI is a one-hour interactive talk show aired between 5 pm and 6 pm every Thursday. It is anchored by Wali Ado Rano, the first person living with AIDS to be on the air in Kano. A minimum of 13 callers join in any day’s discussion.

HIV SUPPORT GROUPS REPORT UPTICK IN MEMBERSHIP & DECLINE IN STIGMA

As a result of the program, more people are now going out to find out their HIV status and know where to get treatment if positive. The program also provides information on how to handle family members who are living with HIV and AIDS. People living with HIV and AIDS say incidence of stigma is also declining.

“I am positive and know what the attitude was before; now my friends are no longer

running away from me; people now see me as a member of the society. Everyday at the end of the program there will be people waiting to see us here right at the station; of course, it is because of the program,” Wali said.

“When we started this program we had about 1,000 members across the state and beyond, but now we have 7,000 members, and the number is increasing every other day,” says Wali, the program anchor, who is also the president of Voice of the Hopefuls, an HIV care and support group.

“This is because of the information and encouragement we give to people on the radio program,” he adds.

Wali is scheduled to participate in one of the professional media training courses organized by Internews.

WOMEN SPEAK OUT

Wali says the radio program provides women the rare opportunity to join in the discussion of health issues and to access information on how to make their own decisions. It is groundbreaking and previously unheard of that women are calling into this program to discuss issues that are otherwise taboo in this conservative region.

TESTING CENTERS REPORT IMPACT OF RADIO SHOW

The impact of the radio show can also be seen in Kano’s VCT centers. Shehu Abdul-lahi, Secretary of Voice of Hopefuls says, “The testing centers are now overflowing



Wali Ado Rano is a person living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA), and the host of *FATA NA GARI*. The wide-ranging discussions on the weekly radio show have had a robust listener response.

with people as a result of the program. I know this because they refer people to us after testing them.”

LISTENERS RESPOND TO PROGRAM TOPICS

“The program has even put us in trouble because we now have too many members ... it’s like we are looking for more trouble.”

After listening to *FATA NA GARI* on April 27, a satisfied listener sent a pack of fruit juice and two packets of digestive biscuits to Wali. That day’s program featured discussions on the importance of good nutrition for people living with HIV.

The program started with no advertising support and now has the potential to become the most profitable timeslot at the station.

Mr. Tudunwada of *Freedom Radio* says the program has changed the face of HIV in the city and beyond.

“The program has gone beyond our imagination; I can tell you that from our audience feedback that *FATA NA GARI* is the most listened program on our station.”

Internews’ *Local Voices* Project is funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) under the President’s Emergency Fund for AIDS Relief, PEPFAR.



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