

MT4 Mobile School Pilot Project in Southern Sudan  
An Interim Evaluation Report

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## **Executive Summary**

*“The messages spread like wildfire. [The MT4 device] is a simple solution, yet very effective. I want to see it used through all of Yei County and throughout all of Southern Sudan.”*

-- David Lokonga Moses, Yei County Commissioner

The pilot training project implemented by T4 Global and Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) of Sudan appears to have been very successful, exceeding planned goals and objectives. The project utilized T4 Global's mobile school concept of introducing a digital audio listening device (MT4) into small group settings, using trusted community leaders and networks for distribution. Three different content areas were covered: (1) the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), (2) HIV/AIDS, and (3) forgiveness and reconciliation. Content was a mix of stories, music, speeches, sermons, and group dialogue/discussions.

Averages of 300 Sudanese were reached by each of the 500 MT4 devices over a 2 ½ month period of time. It is clear that people were excited by the content and eager to spread the content around so rapidly. The project managers had planned to reach 50-100 Sudanese per device in the 2 ½ month time frame. The MT4 generated a lot of discussion during and after listening to the programs. People also shared the information with others who had not heard it. Participants commented that they trusted the content as authoritative and really liked the fact that it was in their local mother tongue (Bari) and familiar presentation style using stories and song. The demand for more devices and more content was overwhelming.

There was evidence of changes in perceptions, attitudes and behaviors. People are taking precautions against HIV while reaching out in care to those who are HIV positive; the CPA discussions have led to some resolution of local disputes; and there is less fighting as a result of the forgiveness and reconciliation messages. Overall the messages were empowering, helping Southern Sudan people to understand their history, the current issues they are facing and reasons for hope for the future.

While we are still waiting on the quantitative analysis to be completed, the findings from the qualitative assessment strongly suggest that the pilot project was successful and should be expanded. By all indications, the mobile school (MT4) methodology is well suited for Southern Sudan and is effective in delivering information and training in a way that changes lives and communities.

## ***T4 Global Program Overview***

T4 Global is a non-profit group of orality strategists who facilitate the transfer of information and training to oral learners. Oral learners are people that either can't, don't or won't read. T4 Global forms alliances of strategic partners to resource and implement training efforts to do more than simply pass along information to oral learners. The vision of T4 Global is to see lives transformed for better as a result of the training effort.

T4 Global has partnered with Stonegate Fellowship Church in Midland, TX to resource and implement a pilot project in Southern Sudan. Stonegate connected T4 Global with Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC), a local Sudanese network of churches, which will be primarily responsible for implementing the project. EPC is led by Bishop Elias Taban and is made up of over 100 local churches, mostly in Southern Sudan.

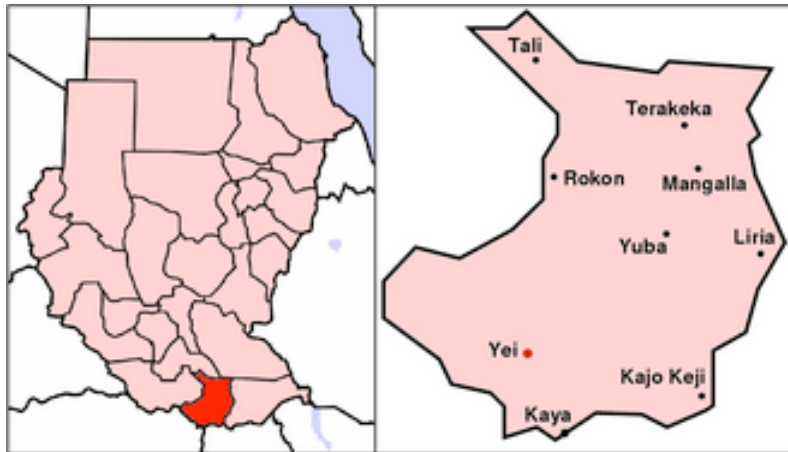


Image: Central Equatoria State in Southern Sudan

The training effort utilized T4 Global's "mobile school" concept which is comprised of a small mobile audio training device introduced into small listening/discussion groups. Approximately 500 mobile school kits (*MT4s*) were disseminated throughout the six counties of Central Equatoria State. Each *MT4* will contain three audio training modules of approximately 8 hours each. The three training modules are:

1. Basic HIV/AIDS awareness, prevention and care training;
2. Basic overview of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in simple terms using dramas and roundtable discussions; and
3. Basic discipleship training for church members focusing on issues of forgiveness and reconciliation.

### ***MT4 Pilot Project goal***

To test the use of T4 Global's audio training methodology in a number of communities in Central Equatoria State using a variety of content chips. If successful, this project should lead to a much larger effort to provide transformational training to millions of oral communicators in Sudan.

### ***MT4 PROJECT OBJECTIVES***

**Strategic Objective 1.** Develop interesting, engaging and effective training content that leads to changes in knowledge, attitude and practice.

**Strategic Objective 2.** Introduce a mobile audio training methodology that is simple, usable and accepted at the grassroots community level.

**Strategic Objective 3.** Elicit community leader involvement and support for the project, including political, religious and village leaders.

**Strategic Objective 4.** Utilize existing known and trusted networks for distribution with maximum exposure.

**Strategic Objective 5.** Strengthen the local church.

### ***Evaluation Design***

The program evaluation design incorporates two methods: method 1 is a quantitative pre-post comparison of survey responses measuring change community knowledge, attitude and behavioral intention focused on the 3 content areas. Additionally the post intervention survey asks a few questions about device usability and community reach. Method 2 is a qualitative evaluation component using focus group interviews with listening groups, development/ distribution team, and community stakeholders. The qualitative methods attempt to further explain program impact, identify successful and mediating factors of the program and expose possible gaps that might be attended to if the program scales up.

The pre intervention survey was conducted in August 2007. At the time of this interim report the post intervention surveys have not been completed. Local distribution issues pertaining to road conditions and fuel shortage have delayed completion of the post intervention survey. This report contains a summary of the focus-group interviews. After

the post intervention survey is complete a comparison of qualitative and quantitative methods may be appropriate to fully evaluate the program.

### ***Initial Interviews and Survey Development***

The initial site visit to Southern Sudan took place in December of 2006. At this time the content development team in Yei Sudan was in the process of preparing content for distribution on the MT4 devices. The prior needs assessment had determined that three areas of content would be featured in three separate “chips” (SD memory cards) for distribution. The three areas of content focused on health, specifically HIV/AIDS awareness, Government training dealing with the comprehensive peace agreement (CPA), and the spiritual chip, dealing with forgiveness and reconciliation.

Three local technicians had been trained in the process of recording and editing content appropriate for oral learners including stories, proverbs, and local songs. These men are bright and capable learners. They were prompt to meetings, well dressed, and were conversant in English. Two were also local pastors.

The project manager is a woman originally from the local area, now living in Kampala, with a college education and obvious project management skills. She is also well spoken, personable and able to help the evaluator better understand the local context. She appeared to have good rapport with the team and summarized the big picture clearly for the evaluator. Local challenges in data collection, survey translation and distribution were gracefully discussed with the evaluator as the strategy emerged.

All of the content for the prototype was recorded for presentation in Bari, the dominant local language. During the site visit in 2006 final editing of audio was taking place and the local distribution plan was being developed. Observations of the development team in action and community stakeholders provided design inputs for the survey instrument.

The development team gave every appearance of a high level of dedication to the project and conveyed a sense of privilege to serve their community in such an effort. There were some technical issues to resolve including using authoring software to clean and compress the final audio as a result of limited access to technical manuals for the computers and authoring software. These issues were resolved with a little technical assistance of the T4 Global staff. Most of these issues appeared to be ‘startup’ issues and once resolved would not pose a problem to sustainability.

Electrical power to use the computer for editing audio was limited to a few hours in the morning (typically 2-3) and 3-4 hours in the evening after the heat of the day had passed. Internet connectivity via satellite connection was intermittent when the power was on and enabled the development team to access updates to software and some technical help. Although I was very impressed with the local team's accomplishments with very limited resources, it was apparent that they would benefit from more reliable internet service and a little more local technical support. They were eager to learn computer skills and appeared to be fast learners.

The development of skills required to sustain local content authoring and distribution are important but not insurmountable. The concern of retaining local people who became skilled appeared to be an issue as NGO's, and work in larger cities such as Kampala tended to lure people away.

### ***Post Distribution Interviews***

Even though content was ready for distribution in February 2007, the devices were mishandled during the shipping process and were completely lost/stolen in Khartoum. An entirely new order for devices was made and they arrived in July. The pre-intervention surveys were finalized in July and were conducted in August just prior to the distribution of devices.

Approximately 500 devices were distributed throughout 6 counties in the Central Equatoria state and had been in circulation for only two months prior to the post distribution interviews. A few areas targeted for pilot distribution had still not been reached yet at that time due to rainy season and road issues.

The post distribution focus group and stakeholder interviews were conducted in late October early November of 2007. Four focus group interviews were conducted with listening groups in 1) Yei town 2) Gimunu, 3) Yei Boma, and 4) Yei County. While there was an original interest in randomly selecting listening groups from the distribution by counties, boma's, and towns it became apparent that this was impractical due to time constraints and local road conditions. The selection of interviewees is a convenience sample.

Each focus group interview was unique in number of people reached, local distribution, and group formation. However each expressed a high level of interest, engagement, and impact of the MT4 program. While it was apparent that there are some solar battery charging and

use issues that need to be resolved especially during the rainy season when the devices were distributed, those appear to be resolvable issues. Of significant importance was the impact on knowledge of HIV/AIDS, the CPA, and spiritual teaching on reconciliation. Three interviewer's notes were analyzed during each of the focus groups and summarized below. Specific details are featured to describe salient points of the focus group interviews.

**Yei town:** We were told that 3-4 community elders would attend this focus group, but approximately 10 showed up for the meeting. All of the elders at this meeting were male. Enthusiasm for the MT4 program was expressed by those who spoke during this meeting.

One elder told us that 25 units were distributed in his Payam and used to reach approximately 9,000 people. At this initial meeting it was presumed that a reach of 360 units per person was not likely, however this number is consistent with reports from other listening groups.

When asked if everyone in their Payam was able to listen to the devices they said no. Several told us that they did not have enough devices to reach all of their people. They commented that their communities were asking them for one for every family. They said that the MT4 devices had created a lot of discussion in their community and that those who had heard were able to share the information with others in their community. (note: Literature suggests that oral learners have a high capacity to remember and re-tell oral content. )

Elders from the Yei town commented mainly on the CPA and HIV content of the MT4 program. They commented that "in a short period of time they have gained much understanding of the CPA and HIV." From the discussion it was apparent that they were very interested in the full implementation of CPA. They commented that "people might consider the MT4 device a liar" if the CPA is not successfully implemented according to the plan explained on the MT4. In later discussions we regarded this as an expression that they accepted the MT4 as authoritative and that they felt empowered to hold their leaders accountable with the results of the CPA.

One person told us "the whole area of Yei is ready to listen to anything spoke on the MT4 device."

**Gimunu Boma:** This focus group was conducted at a road-side market in Gimunu on the road to Juba. The market was small and

appeared to be somewhat of a community gathering place, bus stop, and center of activity. The boma had received one device that they had passed around to 5-6 groups who would gather after church services to listen. The village leader explained that “youth” who would frequently “fight or argue” after services in the past were getting along more after listening to the MT4 device.

Initially, we were somewhat confused by the distinction of “youth” as several in this group identified themselves as youth, but appeared to be in the 25-35 year old range. We later learned that “youth” means “anyone who’s skin is still shiny” and can get around easily. Justo – one of the Sudanese who was working on the project is a youth in his 50’s. The significance of “youth” became more evident as we realized this was comparable to what westerners would call “adults” but not elders.

Others commented that “MT4 brings people together and encourages unity.” The Spiritual chip specifically shares stories from the Bible and Jesus’ teaching about forgiveness and unity. It is reasonable to also connect the way the device is used in 5-6 listening groups as a mediating factor to “bringing people together.” The group commented that favorite parts of the MT4 program were the story of Jesus healing the blind man and the Good Samaritan. (note: The fact that these were the only “stories” in the content vs. speeches, songs, and other information underscores an importance of story in instruction.)

They expressed excitement about the nature of the content and discussed it with great interest in this focus group. A woman in this group told us that now that there was something interesting at church and more people were attending. The teachings of forgiveness and reconciliation were brought up frequently and discussed with significant emphasis in this group. One member commented that due to war there has been much fighting even among southern Sudanese. They said they are learning to forgive each other – and learning not to return “sin for a sin.”

The focus group was able to answer specific questions about HIV/AIDS that indicated knowledge of how it is contracted. They group told us that prior to the MT4 program many of them were unsure how HIV was contracted. They knew it as “The slim disease.” Some thought it might contracted from food, greetings people (i.e. handshake) but now they know more from the teaching on the MT4. When asked questions to test their knowledge they were able to give accurate answers. They said that previously they did not know there is no cure for HIV. They said people are being

more careful. They were concerned for couples who contracted HIV and expressed concern for who would take care of their children.

The leaders in this group estimated that 500-600 had heard the one MT4 player out of 2,060 people in that boma in 2 months time. They said they would have groups of 100 people at a time listen, but that the speaker size and volume was difficult for that many to listen. (note: By design the devices are made for smaller listening groups to encourage group participation and discussion.)

The group asked for more devices, more teaching on farming, and spiritual content. They were happy for the peace they now have [from war] and said they continue to pray for peace. One farmer asked if was possible from them to put teaching stories on the chip to share with others in their community.

When asked to compare the MT4 content with radio they said the MT4 messages are designed to help people and that radio is not designed so. They said that radio has songs, announcements, and sometimes agricultural information. Others commented that the MT4 voice was from “trusted people.”

**Kenya Payam Lainya County:** This meeting had approximately 26 people attending. It was too large to call a focus group and we did not split into smaller groups. In hind sight we might have had more detailed conversations but we didn’t have enough interviewers to effectively do this. Individual conversations did not go as deep as others but there was a considerable amount of community interest.

The county administrator attending this meeting told us they had received 15 players for 3 bomas. They sent 3 players to each of three bomas and used the remaining 6 for “youth” (aka adult) meetings, Women’s groups, the SPLM Secretary, and church meetings. This was interesting because it illuminated the various ways each county might locally manage distribution to best suit their needs. Furthermore, this county explained the process they used to train additional trainers. This group had several of their youth attend training from the EPC for using the device and facilitating conversation. They in-turn trained an additional 3 trainers to help facilitate distribution. When asked how this seemed to work they said that it worked well and that everyone involved in training and distributing information felt privileged to do so.

Much of the information from this group was similar to and confirmed information from the other groups even though most of the conversations did not seem as in depth. Mainly they liked the content, found it interesting and engaging. They said they did not have enough devices, wanted more, and would like additional training on agriculture, oral history. They gave thanks to God for the MT4 program, and also to EPC for caring about them and sharing this with them even though they are not from Yei county.

Of significance was this group's story of a woman in their community who heard the teaching and decided to get an HIV test. She tested positive for HIV. She said that the teaching convinced her that she needed to share this information with her community so that they could know and she could get help. Others in the group told us that because of the teaching they understand how they can help take care of her without fear of contracting HIV. They said they see her as their sister and want to care for her.

Others commented that the "player has brought Government leaders voices to them" and that "previously people heard about the CPA but did not understand. Now that it is told in their own dialect they understand better." The chief commented that they have been able to settle local land rights issues and that local parties are more united. They used to have a lot of difference but the spiritual chip teaches forgiveness and to live as one people, united."

Some women in the group expressed concern about using razors and contracting HIV, information that they said they learned from the MT4 program. Other person said they have been fighting for so long in Sudan, "could we hear about other countries success so we can learn how they deal with such issues?"

### ***Stakeholder Interviews***

Stakeholder interviews included several different meetings attended by various configurations of: Bishop Elias Taban, the MT4 project manager, Yei County Administrators, T4 Global's staff, and a representative of Stonegate Fellowship Church. The fact that not one of those individuals was consistently in every meeting enabled the evaluator to ask independent, confirming, and discerning questions to evaluate consistency in program objectives, goals, values and implementation.

**Yei County Commissioner: David Lokonga Moses:** The commissioner expressed that he loved the MT4 project saying that it was extremely effective. He commented that “the messages spread like wildfire. It is a simple solution, yet very effective.” He said that he “wants to see it used through all of Yei County and throughout all of southern Sudan.”

**Yeitown Payam: County Administrator Interview:**  
Population 150,000 – 200,000 in 5 Bomas  
22 MT4 Devices distributed

The Yei County Administrator explained that the “MT4 project is turning Southern Sudan upside right. We have been upside down for many years.” He also went on to explain how the “MT4 device empowers our people to have a hand in the success or failure of our nation. This community based, grassroots approach is the best we have known.”

One sub-boma that received only one MT4 device reported reaching 3,000 in two months time. They had listening groups as large as 50 at a time. Another boma reported using two MT4s to reach approximately 721 people. It was curious that he knew the exact amount. When questioned about it he explained that the device and teaching is very valuable. They developed a distribution plan and were very careful to document everyone that listened to the device. While this seemed spectacular to the interviewers it appears to reflect the high level of value that all of the groups expressed with the MT4 program, content and concern for stewarding it well.

Another boma distribution facilitator commented how effective the MT4 device was for generating discussion. He compared it to radio, explaining that the MT4 created much more interest as people gathered to listen together and then discussed it during and afterwards. They could stop it and listen to it repeatedly. He observed discussions in the community about the topics covered in the MT4 even when the device wasn't present. He concluded that the MT4 is much more effective in teaching the people than radio.

Other content topics recommended were: economic development, continued information on reconciliation (forgiveness and joining hands together), and agriculture.

**Sponsorship, Development, and Distribution:** Meetings with stakeholders identified some of the complexities of participatory communication strategies and validated the MT4 program as an effective strategy. While there was some concern and discussion of how to develop local technical skills and manage the program as it scales up, it was evident that local management was critical. During the interviews there were several instances identified regarding the allocation of resources and stewardship of funds that would be best managed by indigenous partners. Many times there were concerns raised from the sponsorship team (MT4 and Stonegate) that Bishop Taban addressed in detail and inspiring clarity. Frequently there were “ah-ha” moment as we outsiders learned a bit more about the intricacies of local politics, skills development, and even environmental factors such as the rainy-season, washed out roads, and the African way of doing things. It also became clear that Bishop Taban may have more to offer the West than the West had to offer him in regards to stewardship and best practices.

During these meetings it was agreed that there was additional support needed in technical training, considering a more reliable internet provider and continued partnership. All parties involved seemed to work well together, appreciated the different value that each brought to the partnership and acted in a conscious manner to make the most of people, relationships, funds, and time.

### ***Observations***

Some of the following observations are featured with respect to the evaluation experience.

- A high level of commitment was demonstrated among the development and distribution team that was also reflected in participant’s response to the initiative.
- A high regard for learning and sharing knowledge with others was frequently demonstrated.
- There was as sense of urgency to help others demonstrated by the indigenous partners but also a peace and joy that is unique.
- Respect for community members inclusive of males and females even though there was an apparent hierarchy.

## ***Conclusions***

The evidence from the qualitative components of the evaluation suggests that the project objectives have been met. The quantitative analysis is not complete as of this report. It is apparent that the quantitative methods of pre-post survey have challenged the resources and capacity of the indigenous partners. The methods may not have been appropriately designed to meet the constraints of data collection in Southern Sudan to provide timely and accurate data.

It is my opinion as the evaluator that the entire MT4 program appears to be headed in a positive direction, that the partners involved have learned much from the pilot and that it has been more effective than even the sponsors had planned and imagined. Although reports were not in from all of the bomas who received devices, several that were involved in listening group interviews reported that on average over 300 people were reached by each MT4 device.

The participants indicated that many people from the region were excited about the content and that it has initiated considerable discussion, not only in the listening groups, but in the community after the devices were used. Several groups indicated that people were excited and had a desire to attend church, because there was something interesting to listen to.

Several participants commented that they trusted the content because the spoken words were in the voice of trusted leaders and that they understood it because it was in their local dialect. They said that now that they know the details of the CPA, they can hold their leaders accountable to its implementation.

There was evidence of changes in perceptions, attitudes and behaviors. People said they understood they could care for people with HIV because they didn't have to be afraid of getting the disease by touch or sharing food. One woman got tested for HIV after hearing the MT4 device and she shared the results with the community. The community embraced her in her sickness. People commented that the CPA explanation helped them resolve some local disputes. They also commented that people are getting along better after listening to the MT4 device. There is less fighting. They are forgiving each other, coming together in unity and spending time discussing issues together. The attendance at church has risen noticeably since the introduction of the MT4 devices.

In every post distribution interview we conducted the participants asked for more devices so that more of their community could learn more. They asked for more topics to be covered. They also asked if they could participate in developing content, sharing their knowledge and experiences with other communities.

Although there were songs, expository teaching (or preaching) and dramas on the 3 content chips, when asked what the listeners found most interesting, or what their favorite content was, the most common response was stories that were told using dramas.

### ***Recommendations***

- Use more dramas as learners seemed to enjoy recall and make life application connections with the dramas.
- Address issues related to battery re-charging and increasing play back time.
- Address content that is dynamic in nature such as the CPA with regular updates.
- Consider roles for local communities to participate in content development.
- Address leadership and content development capacity as the program scales to meet the needs of more partners.
- Consider adding additional local languages.
- Consider a more robust mixed methods design of evaluation that more appropriately accommodates not only the physical limitations of travel and data collection in southern Sudan but illuminates the richness and depth of experiential learners.

### ***Independent Evaluator***

The independent evaluator, Derek Eggers, is an instructional strategist who focuses on the use of narrative within instruction to affect attitude and behavioral change. Derek has worked on training and development projects for non-profit, corporate and government clients including: Lear Corporation, Dow Chemical, the U.S Army - CASCOM in Fort Lee VA, and the Wright Patterson Air Force base in Ohio. He is a doctoral candidate in curriculum and instruction at the University of Kentucky. This project is contracted as a program evaluation through The Leadership Emergence Group International of Lexington Kentucky, who focuses on shaping leaders and transforming organizations.