Cláudia Constance

I am from Mozambique and I have been working with IRIN Angola for more than a year now. IRIN gave me the opportunity to tackle issues such as landmines, demobilisation, resettlement and humanitarian assistance. I am also learning about the power of radio: its benefits and needs in a post-conflict country like Angola. From our missions to the provinces, I realise how important this information vehicle is for the rural population. It almost rules their lives: entire families get together to listen to news, to laugh, to learn and discuss.

During the period of electoral registration I travelled to Massangano (in Cambambe, Kwanza Norte) and I met two isolated families of fishermen. They lived in a very remote area. When we arrived, the women were cooking a small lizard, the men were setting up their nets, an old woman was washing some clothes and children were running naked around us. The women said that they only travelled to the village every six months; that all children were born at home and did not go to school; that they used plants and herbs for their health care; and they were happy in that beautiful and green hilly area. I was amazed mostly because although they seemed so isolated, they had a radio and knew what was going on in the country. They were anxious to register to vote.

I just regret that information is still so controlled and limited. The majority of people do not have any option other than the National Radio of Angola (RNA). That is why I think the IRIN programmes, even those co-produced with RNA, can make a difference. We voice the concerns, interests and expectations of rural Angolans by producing regular reports about their problems, their ideas, aspirations and hopes and demonstrating that grassroots community members, peasants, women, children, the elderly and the poor can positively contribute to the development of their country.

We travel far and deep to hear as many and different voices as possible. Each opinion is precious and our fight is to broadcast them all. But life and minds are changing and more than ever people demand information. We just hope to be there whenever they need us.