

[MEDIeA brief project description](#)

People Speaking Back? Media, Empowerment and Democracy in East Africa (MEDIeA)

The role of the media and of communication structures at all levels (community, sub regional, national, regional and international) is inextricably bound up with how citizens understand and engage in democratic life. The rights and capacities of people, particularly those living in poverty, to voice their own perspectives and have them heard in public debate, particularly through the media, are increasingly recognized as critical to effective governance' (James Deane 2008: 161)

This research project will be of 4 years of duration. 'Media, Empowerment and Democracy in East Africa' (MEDIeA) scheduled to start on January 1st 2009 and end on December 31st 2012. Four universities are co-applicants – two Danish and two East African totalling 6 research participants from Kenya, Tanzania and Denmark. They are supplemented by an active international reference group of practical and theoretical leaders in the field of Media, Empowerment and Democracy.

MEDIeA comprises of 6 individual research projects, organised around a Kenya focus and Tanzania focus. Additionally, there are components of dissemination, capacity building and policy dialogue. The research program will be hosted by ØRECOMM – Consortium for Communication and Glocal Change at Department of Communication, Business and Information Technologies, Roskilde University, Denmark.

The core inquiry of MEDIeA grows from a concern about how young people, young women in particular but not exclusively, are secured a role in both the local, national and regional development processes they belong to and, ideally, should be centrally placed within. How are their governments held accountable for the political decisions they make in this regard, and what opportunities are there for ordinary citizens to voice their opinions and engage both in policy development as well as in the process of critique and holding their governments accountable? Stated bluntly: how can young women and men in Kenya and Tanzania engage in and ensure a participatory governance process? Within this overall problem area, the focus of the MEDIeA research proposal is on civil society and the media.

The overall objective of MEDIeA is to explore the role civil society driven media and communication technologies potentially can have in enhancing participatory governance processes in East Africa, particularly in Kenya and Tanzania.

The research project's analytical challenge is to understand the ways and means in which youth as ordinary citizens engage with such civil society driven media and communication platforms and what socio-cultural and political outcomes this may have.