id21insights

Voices for change

Tuning in to community radio

The impact of new information and communication technologies on development is a subject of extensive international debate, particularly at the United Nations World Summit on the Information Society. While much of the debate focuses on the Internet, many planners and practitioners have begun to realise that it is to traditional media, such as radio, that poor people are most likely to turn for access to information and voice.

Community radio is not new. It is present in most countries and all regions of the world. It builds on more than half a century of grassroots experience that has earned it the support of tens of thousands of communities worldwide. Yet community radio is today gaining new recognition and attention.

In wider discussions on poverty reduction and international development there has been renewed emphasis on the need for open and accountable governance, satisfaction of basic needs, and strategies that are people-centred, community-driven and empowerment oriented. It is in these contexts, as a means of providing access to communication, particularly for poor rural communities and marginalised urban populations, that the role and potential of community broadcasting has begun to enter mainstream development thinking. It is also attracting programme support from multilateral agencies including UNDP, the World Bank, UNESCO and FAO.

Community broadcasting has developed among diverse groups, as social movements and community-based organisations have sought to express their concerns, cultures and languages and to create an alternative to state-owned public broadcasting and private commercial media. Community radio has become a means of promoting citizen's participation and popular expression. It defends cultural and linguistic diversity, provides trusted information in a form that is easily understood, enables communities to challenge those in authority and hold their leaders and institutions to account.

This issue of *id21 insights* focuses on the growth of community broadcasting and of community radio in particular. It examines the role of community media in development and some of the continuing and new challenges it faces. This includes the political, legal and regulatory environment, sustainability outside the state and commercial ownership models, and assessment of the social impact of this growing sector.

Bruce Girard from Comunica provided academic advice on this issue: **bgirard@comunica.org**

The enabling environment

The growth of community broadcasting is closely associated with democratic reforms and government policies that support greater pluralism in the media. Yet barriers to establishing community radio still exist. Many governments are still reluctant to cede control of communication channels while increasingly dominant commercial media groups are also trying to squeeze out alternative approaches. India's cautious road to media pluralism is described by **Ashish Sen** in an article highlighting the need for awareness raising and building upon local people's demands.

Community media activists have turned increasingly to the language of human rights and international legal standards on the right to freedom of expression as the means of persuading reluctant governments to allow civil society groups and community-based organisations to take to the airwaves.

In Latin America the regional human rights system has become a valuable ally to community broadcasters. **Aleida Calleja** provides an account of how community broadcasters in Mexico obtained broadcast permits after building alliances with human rights groups and other actors, despite the resistance of powerful commercial media corporations. Calleja demonstrates how the growing international recognition of community broadcasters and an effective country level advocacy strategy combined ▶

Maragusan community audio tower (CAT) was created in April 1995 in Davao del Norte, Mindanao, the second largest island of The Philippines. It was one of the FAO-supported CAT created to improve communication flows within rural communities. The Maragusan CAT played an important role in the establishment of several agricultural ventures such as the 3,000-hectare Durian production project, and the tilapia hatchery which serves as an income generating activity for broadcasters. Maragusan took a step forward and requested support to upgrade the Community Audio Tower to a radio station, which happened In November 1998 with the installation of a small 20-watt transmitter.
Photo by Alfonso Gumucio Dagron

▶ to persuade a new Mexican government that community radio has a right to take its place in the broadcast landscape.

The enabling environment for community radio is not only dependent on having the right laws and regulations. Colombia has one of the best laws on community radio in Latin America and has pioneered the development of community radio linked to rural telecentres. But in regions of conflict in Colombia, as elsewhere, the law is only a partial guarantee. **Clemencia Rodriguez** describes how a citizen's radio in Magdalena Medio was able to mobilise its audience to challenge the threats of armed groups and maintain its independence.

Despite such challenges community radio has grown beyond the point of simply demanding the right to exist. It is now addressing longer term issues of sustainability and social impact. While any attempt to examine the role of community radio in development must address the political, legal and regulatory context, it is these new issues which research must address in order to realise the potential role of community media in reducing poverty and the struggle for social justice.

Sustainability

For community radio practitioners used to operating in precarious economic circumstances, sustainability has long been a concern. **Alfonso Gumucio Dagron** argues that sustainability is not about money alone but must also be understood in terms of the extent to which radio stations have community support, institutional capacity and a wider political environment conducive to their existence and growth.

Indonesia has seen rapid growth in the number of community radio stations, first with a relaxation in broadcasting controls after the fall of the Suharto dictatorship in 1998 and later through the introduction of legislation in 2002 that recognises community radio as a distinct tier of broadcasting, separate from public and commercial broadcasting. **Imam Prakoso** describes the difficult regulatory constraints facing community radio and reports on research which identifies the need to strengthen community participation and to build management, programme-making and fund-raising capacity.

UNESCO has championed the concept of

Radio CBS is owned and operated by the residents of Cipta Bahana Swadaya, a poor squatter neighbourhood in urban Jakarta. It has a core team of 12 volunteers, most of whom are young street vendors. They regularly broadcast information and discussion programmes on issues such as water supply and sanitation, health and housing. The team estimates at least 1, 000 regular listeners.
Photo by Steve Buckley

linking community radio with telecentre services as a means of enhancing the capacity and sustainability of both. **Stella Hughes** reports how UNESCO's evaluation of pilot Community Multimedia Centres (CMCs) has informed strategies for scaling up investment and support for CMCs in Mali, Mozambique and Senegal.

Assessing social impact

As community broadcasting gains recognition and support in national communication policies and from international development agencies it now faces new challenges. How to demonstrate its contribution to the public good? How to provide a voice for critical and alternative perspectives and not be assimilated by government agendas or the marketplace? Evaluating the social impact and effectiveness of community broadcasting is in its infancy and much of the evidence, though extensive, is anecdotal.

Some of the articles begin to redress this. **Birgitte Jallov** provides a methodological brief for 'barefoot impact assessment', based on field research in Mozambique. The approach covers three areas: internal functioning, impact of community radio content, and impact of the radio on community development. It emphasises both the importance of assessments to demonstrate how community radio is contributing to social change and the need to develop tools that practitioners can easily use.

A recent study of 13 radio stations in Africa and Latin America sought to substantiate links between community radio and the Millennium Development Goals. **Nick Ishmael Perkins** suggests that because community radio takes a more integrated approach to development, it is not always useful to assess the goals as

separate measures. Focus group research is better than quantitative scoring for establishing such links.

Community broadcasters themselves are well aware of the significance radio services can have for their own communities. Among the challenges that practitioners, stakeholders and researchers face are to:

● demonstrate, with clarity, the approaches to policy, law and regulation that are most conducive to the further development of community broadcasting
● learn, from the experience of effective advocacy and the implementation of policy reform, how to adapt successful strategies to country contexts
● understand the factors which influence sustainability and develop solutions that can assure the longer term survival and growth of community media
● develop appropriate and transferable methods for assessing and evaluating the social impact of community broadcasting.

The wider challenge for development research is to articulate this grassroots practice with mainstream agendas on poverty reduction, empowerment, social justice and the role of traditional and new information and communication technologies ■

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Acronyms/Abbreviations

CMC	Community Multimedia Centre
COMBINE	Community-based Information Network
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FM	Frequency Modulation (A change in the frequency or pitch of a signal)
ICTs	Information and Communication Technologies
ITU	International Telecommunications Union
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
VOICES	Voices of Individuals and Communities Empowering Society through Vehicles of Information and Communication Enabling Social Change

Step by step
Towards legislation and practice in India

More than a decade after the Indian Supreme Court judged that 'airwaves are public property', national laws still prohibit genuine community radio broadcasting. Residential universities and educational institutions, however, can apply for broadcasting licenses. Although the government refers to these as community radio stations and they transmit beyond their campuses, they are in fact campus radio. While this indicates change at policy levels, the crucial question for India now is: how soon will community radio follow?

VOICES is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) based in Bangalore committed to developing communication that strengthens social empowerment. Its advocacy initiatives have included the Bangalore Declaration (1996) and the Pastapur Initiative (2000), both aimed at creating a three-tiered radio structure in the country: public, private and community. They also helped create awareness about community radio among government, NGOs and the general public.

The 2000 New Delhi Declaration discussed the feasibility of Gyan Vani, an educational FM radio network funded by the Indira Gandhi National Open University. It demonstrated a shift in official thinking and as much as 40 percent of broadcast time could be used for community development purposes.

The launch of ANNA FM in early 2004, the first campus radio in the country, was a more distinctive milestone in terms of community radio however, as it enabled students and academic staff to play an active role in designing and managing radio stations. It was also the first time that a radio station (albeit educational) was not government controlled.

Independent of these declarations, Namma Dhwani – a partnership between the farmer community of Budikoti village, the NGO MYRADA, and VOICES, with support from UNESCO was launched in 2000. An assessment by MYRADA in 1999 confirmed that the community, on the border of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh States, wanted local communication systems to address local needs. The language spoken by the community is very different from that spoken on the government radio and the closest radio station was some 100 kilometres away. Located in a very poor district with low literacy rates, radio, relying as it does the spoken word, was a logical choice for connecting the community with information. Today, it is the first community media centre in the country that has a cable radio station managed by the local community.

In May 2004 there was a national consultation on allowing community radio in India by the Information and Broadcasting Ministry, UNDP and UNESCO. A draft consensus document became the basis for future discussions at official level. It recommends a model where NGOs and communities are eligible to run their own community radio stations.

While campus radios have increased rapidly across the country, radio for and by the community is still trying to establish itself. India's experience highlights the following:

- Advocacy is more effective through grassroots efforts such as Namma Dhwani. Positive shifts in government policy are more likely if demand is demonstrated.
- Community radio needs to be a part of the curricula and syllabi in Communications and Media Institutes. Greater collaboration between academic staff and practitioners is required.
- Networking including websites, consultations, workshops and training programmes need to be developed to promote the idea and power of community radio. Otherwise, there will be only isolated projects ■

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Legalising community radio in Mexico

The struggle for community radio's legal recognition in Mexico began in 2002, when several unlicensed community radio stations came under threat. The book *Con Permiso* describes and analyses the process through which community radio in Mexico obtained legal recognition, despite opposition from the owners of the most powerful commercial media in the country, Televisa and TV Azteca.

In 2000, President Vicente Fox's National Action Party (PAN) won the Mexican election, taking over from the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which had been in power for 70 years and had prevented freedom of expression. After the election, citizen's groups demanded reform of the Radio and Television Act, the right to freedom of expression and the need to limit private media concentration in the hands of corporations such as Televisa.

Initially, there was optimism. A multi-stakeholder discussion forum was established in 2001, which included legislators, representatives of political parties, academics, media owners and citizen groups. The demand for community radio recognition was presented, along with other proposals for reform and democratisation of the media. The government appeared to accept the case for reform and for a short time the practice of closing existing community radio stations without a license was suspended.

Behind the scenes, however, lobbying of the federal government by commercial broadcasters produced a new radio and television decree weighted strongly in their favour. Persecution of the community radio stations started again and community broadcasters such as Radio Jën Poj reported military raids and violent closures of stations.

The experience of Mexican broadcasting highlights the challenge communities faced in their struggle for the right to freedom of expression and information – an internationally guaranteed right and one the government could not set aside:

- In 2003 both the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights intervened with recommendations to the Mexican government to cease the persecution of community radio and to provide proper operating licenses.
- At a hearing of the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights in March 2004, the Mexican government accepted that community radio was a human rights issue and undertook to establish a process for legal recognition of not-for-profit community radio stations serving indigenous people and rural and marginalised communities.
- The recent history of community radio in Mexico can be seen as directly related to the transition in power since, for over 70 years, Mexico had been a one-party state.

Despite desperate efforts by commercial broadcasters to persuade President Vicente Fox to abandon the licensing plans, the first two community radio licenses were awarded in December 2004 and nine more have been awarded since.

Community radio's experience in Mexico demonstrates how a movement made up of alliances between intellectuals, journalists, public officials, mass media and human rights groups achieved, after more than 40 years of radio and television legislation, permission from the state for indigenous peoples, rural and urban communities to have their own radio ■

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Colombian radio thrives in armed conflict

Tiny radio stations and other media initiatives managed by citizens' groups are operating successfully in regions where leftist guerrilla organisations, right-wing paramilitary groups, drug traffickers and the Colombian army have a strong presence.

The University of Oklahoma in the USA, Magdalena Medio Community Radio Stations Association (AREDMAG), Universidad Javeriana and Universidad del Norte in Colombia have examined citizens' media in areas of armed conflict. Initiatives are achieving significant results and transforming communities living in difficult circumstances.

Some years ago the radio station director in Santa Rosa del Sur del Bolívar, a small town in Magdalena Medio, was captured by one of the guerrilla groups in the region, as a way of pushing the community to support them. As soon as the radio station heard the news, it broadcast a message demanding that the guerrillas respect the director's life as a civilian uninvolved with any of the armed groups. Immediately messages and letters of support poured in from individuals and social organisations, demanding his freedom and respect for his life.

The guerrillas then called the station and challenged the community to go to their camp to recover the director. The station broadcast their demand and within six hours 480 citizens had approached the station, ready to go. A caravan of buses, trucks, and jeeps packed with men, women, and children made a fifteen hour journey through the Andes highlands to the guerrilla camp. Two days later they returned with the director.

This collective action, facilitated by the radio station, sent a clear message to the guerrillas and other armed groups in the region that the community had declared itself neutral, and that all armed groups were expected to respect civilians' rights. This case illustrates that more than pre-designed campaigns and messages about peace-building and conflict resolution, what communities in regions of armed conflict need are their own communication tools and skills that can be used when needed.

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Evaluation of Citizens' Radio in Magdalena Medio, unpublished research report, by AREDMAG, C. Rodriguez, J. Vega, A. Cadavid, A. García, and P. Téllez, 2004

Sustainability is not just about money

Sustainability is too often associated solely with funding. Community media projects are considered 'sustainable' – and therefore 'successful' – when they manage to finance their operations. Little attention has been given to other crucial aspects of sustainability: institutional and social. Money is important, but the main pillar that sustains community media is its community's participation.

Alternative, independent and citizen's media have tried to solve the sustainability puzzle for more than fifty years. Community radio stations number thousands – particularly in Latin America but also in Africa and Asia – and they will all claim that they have a hard time surviving; nevertheless they do, year after year. Many are being supported by NGOs, cooperation agencies, progressive churches, solidarity groups and some even by the government but that only tells part of the story. They would not have survived if their constituency, the community was not committed to them.

There are exceptional cases of communities that are also committed to providing financial support. This happened for over 30 years at miners' radio stations in Bolivia, where poor mineworkers donated one day of their salary each month to their stations. However, collaboration in funding was never the main highlight of this particular experience but the fact that the mineworkers had total control, made the decisions on programming and participated in setting principles and planning strategies. As a result their social organisations grew in strength, such that for many years their points of view on national issues determined political debate.

The Bolivian experience illustrates that owning the decision-making process and participating in programming are key elements for social sustainability, while institutional sustainability is the result of internal democracy and a favourable political environment:

● Social sustainability relates to the political and communicational platform and has much to do with long-term commitment and participation. In addition to including ownership at its core, it is about articulating issues such as cultural and linguistic identity, generating local content relevant to community life, and strengthening collective and individual voices.

● Institutional sustainability is the framework that facilitates participatory processes. On the one hand, it has to do with existing regulations and state policies – the political atmosphere that allows an experience to be developed without censorship or external pressures. On the other hand, it relates to procedures and relationships within the community radio, internal democracy, decision-making and transparent management. The political environment is not to be underestimated: issues of power constantly influence sustainability, often hidden behind legislation constraints. The privatisation of radio frequencies, promoted by multilateral financing organisations, has worsened a situation where the media is owned by a few and private media networks are expanding beyond national borders.

Civil society organisations in each country need to fight for legislation that protects their community media against such privatisation, unfair commercial practices and pressures of large private media owners. Negotiations between civil society organisations and governments are necessary to reach consensus and avoid reproducing the divide that is now clear ■

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'Take Five: A Handful of Essentials for ICTs in Development' by Alfonso Gumucio-Dagron, in *The one to watch: radio, new ICTs and interactivity*, edited by Bruce Girard, Rome: FAO, 2003
www.comunica.org/1-2-watch/html/download.htm

Keywords: broadcast, CMC, community, community multimedia centre, community radio, development, frequency, ICT, impact, inclusion, information and communication technologies, internet, participation, radio, station, sustainability, transmit

Community Multimedia Centres provide development services

Community Multimedia Centres (CMCs) combine community radio and telecentre services to form a comprehensive information and communication platform serving local development needs. Launched in 2001 by UNESCO, today there are over 50 centres in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean and scale-up projects are underway in Mali, Mozambique and Senegal.

Manhiça Community Multimedia Centre in the southernmost province of Mozambique serves both the individual and the community. Right: a woman queues at the reception desk of the telecentre, which offers telephone, fax, scanning and computer services. Above: Radio Komati is attached to the telecentre. The DJ pictured, Elias Raul S. Langa, is also a farmer.
Photos by Sergio Santimano

Telecentres make it easier for poor and marginalised communities to access new information and communication technologies (ICTs). Operating community radio stations alongside telecentres seeks to ensure that more informed radio programming reaches communities marked by illiteracy and limited access to information. Radio presenters broadcast information obtained by email, through the Internet or on a CD, explain what these technologies are and encourage listeners to come in and use them. Community members can use computers, get training, access email, scan documents, make phone calls or send faxes.

The participatory model and the role of information mediators determine how the technologies' potential is exploited. Useful information for farmers or traders may exist on the web, but only local radio can convey it in local languages, put the information in context and initiate discussion. Using the telecentre, the farmers or traders can then individually follow up the broadcasted information. Users unable to read or write are helped by facilitators who also offer a variety of training and educational activities. Unlike privately run cybercafés, the CMC offers a combination of for-profit and subsidised or free services.

Results reported by CMCs include:

- Increased uptake of public services, including health and education. In Sengerema town in Tanzania, the District Council uses the CMC to inform people about vaccination drives, voter registration, seminars and meetings. Following the announcement of a vaccination drive over the radio, the rate of vaccination of children under five increased.
- Gradual shifts in power relations between genders, social groups and economic levels, encouraged by the CMC's ability to give local people a 'voice' and take up issues with local administrations. For example, when Cocodrilo CMC opened in Cuba, the community successfully lobbied for an increase in its electricity supply.
- Strengthened cultural expression through broadcasting and publishing local music, drama, festivals, stories, and news on websites. Koutiala CMC is championing use of the N'ko alphabet in Mali for desktop publishing.
- Improved economic opportunities. Artisans use the centres' digital cameras and email to market their products more widely. By using the CMC to publicise their work, including selling a publicity video, the Sengerema Informal Sector Association's income increased from 7 million Tanzanian Shillings in 2003 to 25 million Shillings in 2004.
- Other traders cut import costs by ordering goods online, rather than travelling to buy them.

Simply placing ICTs in a community is not enough, however. In addition to developing key tools with partners to support CMCs (see box below), UNESCO's scale-up strategy for CMCs involves:

- building on existing initiatives by adding components to an existing radio station, telecentre or other community centre
- staff training and developing local content, notably through national resource centres, wherever these can be established or developed
- multi-stakeholder coalition-building at local, national and international levels to support CMC development and operations
- integrating the centres into national strategies for ICTs as well as health, education, agriculture and environmental protection.

UNESCO's experience and evaluation of CMCs has shown that combining new ICTs with community radio can create effective grassroots development service providers. CMCs offer direct delivery of a wide range of development activities. Partners can reinforce the CMC and help ensure the sustainability of their crucial role by using the centres to deliver projects ■

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How to Get Started and Keep Going: A Guide to Community Multimedia Centres, edited by Stella Hughes, Sucharita Eashwar, Venus E. Jennings, Paris: UNESCO, 2004
http://www.unesco.org/webworld/cmc

Tools for CMC development

UNESCO, with international, national and local partners, has developed four key tools to support the public service role of the community multimedia centre and its staff:

- **The Multimedia Training Kit** a comprehensive set of workshop and training materials. It covers technical skills; radio and web content development skills; developing thematic content; organisational development and planning; and ICT policy, advocacy and the digital divide. Materials are available online on: **www.itrainonline.org/itrainonline/mmtk/**
- **eNRICH** a generic browser user interface that can be easily customised into local languages and with which people can interact using text, audio and video. It enables communities to quickly and efficiently build their own gateway website, with local content and connected to knowledge sources and services according to their own information and communication needs. **www.enrich.nic.in/**
- **Ethnographic Action Research** a participatory monitoring and evaluation methodology. It uses ethnography to guide the research process and action research to link the research back to the CMC's plans and activities. A user's handbook is available at: **http://unescodelhi.nic.in/publications/ear.pdf**
- **Radio Browsing** a programme format for broadcasting web content while on air. It is a programme in which radio presenters gather information in response to listeners' needs and queries from reliable sites on the Internet, on CD-ROMs or other digital resources. 'Step by Step: a Guide to Radio Browsing' is available at **www.unesco.org/webworld/cmc**

New voices in Indonesia
Challenges and opportunities

The Indonesian government acknowledged the existence of community radio stations with the ratification of the Broadcasting Law in 2002. There are still constraints to their smooth functioning, however, in particular unclear regulation and low-skilled community radio activists. They also remain in an inferior position to commercial broadcasters, for whom community radio stations are potential competitors. Yet, community radio in Indonesia has helped improve democratic processes and promote local culture.

Combine Resource Institution, Indonesia and a British media consultant conducted a study for the World Bank Institute in 2005, analysing the legal framework for and mapping community radio. Research was conducted in West Java Province in Java Island and Lombok Island in West Nusa Tenggara.

Gaining recognition for community radio was not easy. At first the government objected, arguing that multiple community radio stations would be a waste of frequencies and could also result in national disintegration.

However, community radio activists and civil society groups held lengthy discussions with parliament members and provided them with concept papers about community radio. They also held numerous workshops and meetings with different groups, particularly commercial broadcasters and government officials. Community radio's existence was eventually accepted by the government, although restrictions still obstruct development. These include:

- Community radios can only operate on three frequency channels: 107.7, 107.8 and 107.9 Megahertz (MHz) on the FM band. The distance between each is only 100 Kilohertz (KHz), which is against International Telecommunications Union regulations that state there must be at least 350 KHz between channels. Conflicts often arise, especially with those commercial radios that broadcast on 107.6 MHz FM.
- Effective Radiated Power (the power output of the transmitter) is a maximum of 50 watts and the broadcasting range is a maximum of 2.5 kilometres. As the landscape in Indonesia is very diverse, such regulations can probably only be effectively applied in Java Island. Most other villages cover a larger area than the regulation provides for.
- Community radio stations are prohibited both from selling commercial advertising and receiving funds from international agencies. Therefore they have to rely entirely on funding from within their communities.

To commercial broadcasters community radios stations are potential competitors

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Despite this, community radio is expanding. Java Island alone has more than 400 stations. In the last four years, several of them have played strong roles in democracy and development:

- Angkringan FM, a community radio in Yogyakarta promoted the transparency of village administration by airing a meeting between the village executive and the community representative body on village regulation and budget allocation.
- In a remote village, a community radio activist reported on the progress and weakness of infrastructure projects, including how the project allocated funds. Because of this, the project was compelled to share information about the budget.
- Primadona FM in Lombok went against the trend of playing Indonesian and 'western' music, broadcasting instead programmes with traditional themes, local music and poetry and using local languages which enabled interactive dialogue with listeners.

Training from civil society organisations to enhance station management, journalism skills, broadcast production and community involvement has contributed to these outcomes. But broadcasting management, journalism skills and ability to raise funds remain relatively low. The study proposes that to create a better environment for community radio in Indonesia:

- International institutions need to support policies and regulation beneficial for community radio development, including regulating licensing procedures and allocating frequencies to more than just three channels.
- Community radio networks in the various regions need to be strengthened.
- Radio personnel skills must be expanded through training, mentoring and manuals for establishing community radio stations, organisation and management, best practices and lessons learned ■

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Useful web links

World Association of Community Broadcasters
www.amarc.org

The Association for Progressive Communications
www.apc.org

oneworld radio: sharing programmes and ideas on development
www.oneworld.net/radio

Radio for peace-building Africa
www.radiopeaceafrica.org

The Communication Initiative
www.comminit.com/radio/

UNESCO Communication and Information
http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/

Community Radio Network: empowerment for development
www.communityradionetwork.org

Latin American Radio Education Association
www.aler.org.ec/

FAO Rural Radio
www.fao.org/sd/ruralradio/en/index.html

Developing Countries Farm Radio Network
www.farmradio.org

Communication for social change
www.communicationforsocialchange.org

InterworldRadio: a free global network for radio stations and journalists
www.interworldradio.net

Soul Beat Africa: communication for change
www.comminit.com/africa/

Radio south of the Sahara
http://www-sul.stanford.edu/depts/ssrg/africa/radio.html

Tracking Resources for Radios in Africa
www.mediafrica.net/English/Main.php

Combine Resource Institution – Community-based Information Network
www.combine.or.id

Soul Beat Africa: communication for change
http://www.comminit.com/africa/community-radio/

Radio assesses community change in Mozambique

An expanding network of community radios is strengthening civil society and supporting community development and social change in Mozambique. The increase from one community radio station in 1994 to nearly fifty in 2005 means that more than a third of the population now lives within reach of a station. Regular, sustainable, impact assessments are essential if these stations are to be effective.

Tutsirai Maura works at Rádio Comunitária Macequece, in the central Manica province of Mozambique. Tutsirai is one of the 50 regular contracted volunteer community programme producers. With the Women's Collective, Tutsirai produces weekly programmes on issues such as empowering women to work effectively for the changes needed in their lives.
Photo by Birgitte Jallov

The UNESCO/UNDP Mozambique Media Development Project set out to determine whether community radio stations promote democracy, active involvement of communities and allow people to set their own development agendas. They also wanted to ensure that volunteer community radio producers would be able to carry out assessments by themselves beyond the project's end. They designed and then used what was labelled a 'barefoot' impact assessment, so called because the methodology was easy to apply and produced understandable results.

The impact assessment focussed on three sets of questions:

- Is the radio station working effectively internally and do the volunteers have contracts, rights and clearly defined duties?
- Do the programmes respond to the interests of the public? Are they well researched, using culturally relevant formats such as story telling, songs, proverbs and music? Are they considered good and effective by listeners?
- Does the radio station create desired development and social change (determined by the original baseline research) within the community?

'Barefoot' impact assessments of eight of Mozambique's community radio stations revealed both positive results and potential problems:

- Areas of Dondo, a town in the centre waiting for electricity for years, got it following an intense one month community radio campaign.
- The number of deaths caused by cholera in Dondo during annual flooding in 2004 dropped drastically to zero because during a cholera epidemic the radio broadcast information about, among others, the distribution of chlorine and the importance of putting it in the water.
- The number of people seeking HIV testing increased significantly after radio programmes created an environment where the subject could be discussed openly. Working on and listening to radio programmes also helped young people build up confidence to negotiate practicing safe sex.
- The radios' civic education campaigns resulted in increased participation, heightened debate and community control of election procedures.
- In one case most management functions had been filled by people from the Catholic Church and the assessment discovered that the radio was beginning to be referred to within the community as a Catholic radio, which was potentially divisive.
- One radio station had a high turnover among volunteers, motivating the radio management to discover why they were all leaving and what could be done.

'Barefoot' impact assessments can ensure that community radio stations are on track with their objectives. They can also provide feedback to the communities in which they are working and demonstrate their credibility to local and international funding partners. They need to be simple enough to be sustainable without external assistance and systematic, making sure that impact is assessed at all three levels outlined above ■

Doing a 'barefoot' impact assessment	
Area of assessment	**What to do**
Ensuring that the radio works effectively as an institution and that all groups within the community are involved (twice yearly)	Use a checklist: 1. Staff: any vacancies? Are responsibilities clear? How long have people been involved? What training has been received? 2. Volunteer structure: how many? Duration of involvement? Training received? 3. Work/action plans: do they exist? Are they used? Status of budgets, accounts, time-plans? 4. Programmes: content variation, relevance, local production, source of content? 5. Community involvement and participation: who comes to meetings? Who doesn't? 6. Sustainability: status of partnerships? Fundraising initiatives? 7. Satisfaction: of staff, volunteers and community members
The impact of community radio content (ongoing assessment)	1. Conduct informal interviews while out preparing programmes or doing other radio work 2. Register opinions of listeners that telephone in 3. Register and analyse letters received from listeners 4. Register and analyse responses to questions printed on the back of returned message slips (used to announce births, deaths, community events, meetings and so on) 5. Conduct interviews with people living near individual programmers 6. Conduct interviews with people during major public events
The impact of radio on community development (ongoing and annual assessments)	1. Conduct individual interviews 2. Conduct focus group interviews (distinct profiles, such as young women, young men, women in rural areas, men in rural areas, women in town-like areas, men in town-like areas), with 6-10 people per group 3. Keep identified problems at the forefront of organisation and planning (in Mozambique these are: food security; health; and security & infrastructure)

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Lessons for localising development

Do community radio stations cover development issues? Is there a real link between the participation and social mobilisation effects associated with community radio and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)?

In 2004, AMARC Africa, PANOS Southern Africa and Pronatura-Chiapas in Mexico commissioned a study on the development content of community radio services. The study covered 13 stations in South Africa, Zambia, Mali, Senegal, Guatemala, Southern Mexico and Panama.

The research pointed out gaps in perception between technocratic development planners and local communities. The research methodology used a quantitative process to measure the number of hours the stations dedicated to various development themes, and focus groups to explore how different stakeholders respond to this content.

Findings from the quantitative research suggested a number of gaps in development content aired by the stations. For instance, 'environment' themes received an average of less than two hours of programming per month in some African stations, while none of the Central American stations had specific programmes on food security. Furthermore, none of the stations had ever carried out a comprehensive needs assessment and the use of development experts was uneven.

A different story emerged from the focus group discussions, however:
- All the focus groups in each region said using local languages increased their understanding of programme messages. This makes radio particularly efficient, considering that radio sets are seven times more common than television sets in Africa and that some countries, such as Zambia have 73 local dialects.
- Radio stations do integrate development topics, according to community experiences. Seven of the ten stations studied in Africa mention 'development' in their mission statements, which suggests that they do deal with such issues but not in a sector-specific way: for instance, farming programmes are as likely to cover maternal health or girl child education, although the station has no plans for 'gender' programmes.
- Community Radio is seen as a good example of democracy within media structures. Its very presence was universally considered to be a means of expressing rights. Content analysis also showed that 'democracy' receives the largest thematic coverage per month in all countries.

Community media can play a significant role in facilitating community and national ownership of development agendas. Firstly, it registers the extent and experience of poverty in a community's own words. Through community radio's familiarity with the local articulation of rights and demands, it also enforces accountability among stakeholders. For Guatemalan audiences, the station was seen to have enabled a process of empowerment.

Policy implications arising from this research are:
- Local interventions are often integrated and community radio can illustrate how investment in one sector can often lead to results in another.
- This can be particularly important for those tracking progress on achieving development goals, as the investment might be taking place somewhere else, for instance, maternal health improvements through more investment in road infrastructure rather than clinics.
- While donor assistance has generally increased over the last three years, it is unclear whether this includes ICTs and if funding for ICT emphasises media that reaches the poorest people. Donors should consider community radio as an important tool for development planning in all sectors and for delivering services ■

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Email discussion

Community radio for development

23 January – 18 February 2006

Radio is hugely successful in developing countries. Community radio – radio for and by the community – seeks participation from local people, defends their interests, informs and educates. It can make a great contribution to social inclusion and development.

id21's email discussion on community radio for development is a forum for you to share your views on the issues raised in this edition of id21 insights. Participants will include international and national policymakers, journalists, broadcasters, NGOs and researchers from a range of disciplines. We will produce a discussion report (available online and in hardcopy free of charge) in March 2006.

To join the discussion, send an email to lyris@lyris.ids.ac.uk with the message:
subscribe communityradio firstname lastname
e.g. subscribe communityradio Jane Smith

For more information see our website www.id21.org/communityradio