

# Empowering Radio

*Good practices in development &  
operation of community radio:  
Issues important to its effectiveness*

**Program on Civic Engagement, Empowerment & Respect for Diversity,  
World Bank Institute (WBIST)**

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## INTRODUCTION

Across many countries and in different regions, community radio stations have been fostering community participation and creating an appetite for transparent and accountable governance, even in challenging regulatory environments. Participation and governance depends on common people, particularly poor communities, collectively articulating their concerns and shaping the topics that are to be discussed and on which government action is scrutinized, promoted, and monitored.

Community radio stations are owned and operated by the communities they serve. They are non-profit, non-partisan, and usually non-sectarian, and they operate in a participatory way, often relying on community volunteers to produce and present programmes, to raise money and even to manage the stations. Through community radio, poor constituencies can develop their own news programs and organize discussions on matters affecting their community. They share information in a language they understand. They can debate issues, produce weekly programs, and develop talkback radio programs by phone or mail drop. In the process, poor constituencies who were isolated and marginalized are becoming energized, developing informed opinions, and becoming more adept at using information to protect themselves, to make informed decisions and to get results.

In most of the countries in which the World Bank's Civic Engagement, Empowerment and Respect for Diversity (CEERD) program works, one important focus is to support interested communities to establish community radio stations and to develop their capacities in programming, credible local reporting, station management and resource mobilization. This is being done as a preliminary phase, before developing larger support programs for the community radio sector. In particular, this phase will clarify how best to support the participatory planning and establishment of community radio and how to enhance capacity and the likelihood of sustainability. There is also a pressing need to learn good practices in the development, operations and maintenance of these community radio stations, particularly on issues important to their effectiveness. Likewise, there is a need to learn the risks involved and how to mitigate them. The findings of this phase can help better plan for a larger, more comprehensive support program for the community radio sector.

### About this report

This report is based on five national studies conducted by local consultants.<sup>1</sup> The local consultants worked primarily with existing information and occasionally filled in the gaps with interviews and meetings with key actors. Interviewees were primarily community radio workers and volunteers. A coordinator/editor provided guidance to the local consultants and, based on their research, prepared this report that distils, analyses and presents their key findings.

The national consultants were Amparo Cadavid – Colombia, Martin Faye – Mali, Raghu Mainali – Nepal, Carlos Rivadeneyra – Peru, and Nkopane Maphiri, South Africa. Their studies were drafted during April and May 2007. They are included as annexes in their original language.

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<sup>1</sup> The five countries are Colombia, Mali, Nepal, Peru and South Africa. Originally Ghana and Indonesia were to be included but they were dropped because of scheduling problems.

The national studies addressed a common set of topics, providing descriptions and analyses of country/case examples. The topics were:

- Participatory processes and volunteerism
- Relationship with the community
- Exertion of rights
- Accountability and good governance
- Community radio networks
- Financing and financial sustainability
- Community radio in conflict and post-conflict situations

The specific context of each country meant that certain topics yielded more useful information than others. For example, Colombia has taken a highly interventionist approach in its legislation, in Mali community radio has been associated with democratic reform and decentralisation and Nepal's community radio movement is very young.

The country studies were based on existing information, occasionally supplemented with a few interviews or field visits to one or more community radio stations. The studies were therefore limited from the beginning because there has been very little rigorous research done around community radio. For example, in 1999 Colombia's Department of Communications conducted a survey of the literature on community radio and concluded firstly that most of the studies available were undergraduate theses and secondly that these theses were more concerned with what community radio should be than what it is. The studies were very general and demonstrated little analysis and few proposals.<sup>2</sup> Eight years later the research conducted for this report found that little had changed:

1. Whatever serious research has been done has been concentrated on a very limited number of experiences;
2. Most of the available information is in the form of news stories published in internet portals and other "alternative" media or papers presented at conferences. Usually the work of community radio broadcasters and activists, these texts provide information and opinion, but not rigorous research;
3. What academic research has been done, mostly undergraduate and graduate theses, looks at specific radio stations and projects. From 1994, when community radio emerged as a national phenomenon in Colombia, to 2007 only one study has attempted to develop a complete picture of community radio across the country.<sup>3</sup>

The case of Colombia is typical. The community radio "boom" that has been experienced over the past fifteen years in all the countries included in this study has not been accompanied by a significant increase in research and knowledge that might inform policy at the national level. A large part of the community radio knowledge base is anecdotal, historical (studies of a handful of pioneering experiences over the past fifty years) or foreign (usually models from Europe, Australia and North America).

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<sup>2</sup> Colombia report page 3

<sup>3</sup> Gómez and Quintero

## Structure of the report

There are four main sections in this report.

The report begins by briefly introducing the concept of community radio and discussing some of its key defining characteristics: *community-based*, *independent*, *not-for-profit*, *pro-community development* and *participatory*. The community radio stations of all five countries included in the study share these characteristics, although the emphasis on any given one varies depending on local factors.

The next section provides some selected data about each country in the form of a brief snapshot of socio-economic indicators, selected information about the country's history, geography, culture and media environment. The information here is not intended to facilitate a comparison between countries, but to highlight specific characteristics that have influenced the particular challenges faced by the sector and the models that have emerged.

The chapters of the main body of the report respond to the issues addressed by the series of questions in the terms of reference:

- Participatory processes and volunteerism
- Relationship with the community
- Exertion of rights
- Accountability and good governance
- Community radio networks
- Financing and financial sustainability
- Community radio in conflict and post-conflict situations

Using data and examples from the country reports, the issue chapters identify country-level practices that worked (and of some that did not). The purpose is not to prescribe solutions but to describe models from which other community broadcasters can choose and adapt to their own local context.

Finally, conclusions and recommendations are gathered together in the final section. Annex 1 contains the terms of reference for the study, Annex 2-6 are the country reports, in their original languages.

## WHAT IS COMMUNITY RADIO?

There is no single definition of community radio and there are almost as many models as there are stations. Each community radio station is a hybrid, a unique communication process shaped by a few over-arching characteristics and by the distinct culture, history, and reality of the community it serves. Nevertheless, there are some characteristics that community radio stations have in common. Among these are that they are community-based, independent, not-for-profit, for the community, and participatory.

**Community-based:** The station is based in its community and accountable to it. Usually the community is defined geographically, although its size can range from a neighbourhood or small town, to an entire city or a vast rural area covering thousands of square kilometres. Stations can also serve particular communities of interest such as women, youth or linguistic and cultural minorities.

Community media are owned and controlled by the community. In some cases the legal owner is the community itself, via an association established for the purpose. In others the legal owner is a not-for-profit group, a cooperative, an NGO, a municipality, or even a privately-owned company acting on behalf of the community. Regardless of the legal structure, the policies and objectives of the station are articulated with a strong input from stakeholders within the community and community members have both a sense of ownership and a real ability to shape the station to suit their wishes and needs.

**Independent:** Regardless of ownership, community media are independent of government, donors, advertisers and other institutions. This does not mean that they do not have relations with these institutions or that they cannot receive funding from them, but the nature of their relations must be transparent and cannot compromise the station's independence. Where there is a potential for independence to be compromised, which often happens when money is involved, the relations are governed by clear and transparent agreements that guarantee the non-partisan community-service nature of the medium, while operating within the boundaries defined by the law and by the constitution/guiding principles of the station. Transparent governance structures, such as an elected board of governors, ensure that the station is responsive to community needs and interests.

**Not-for-profit:** To say that a community radio station is not-for-profit does not mean that it cannot carry advertising or that it has to be poor. It merely means that any surplus it makes is reinvested in the station and the community. The Italian *Radio Popolare*, for example, is financed with a combination of advertising and listener subscriptions and with annual revenue of one million euros it is one of the wealthiest community radio stations in the world. The station's shareholders are thousands of its listeners and supporters and rather than collecting dividends, they make donations to help the station fulfil its mandate.

Community radio stations finance themselves in many ways: advertising, listener donations, concerts, international donors, government grants and so on. As one Ecuadorian broadcaster put it, "We're not for profit, but we're not for bankruptcy either."

**Pro-community:** To say that community media are not-for-profit leaves open the question: What do community media stand for? If they don't exist to make a profit, why do they exist? The broad answer to that question is that community



radio exists to support and contribute to the community's social, economic and cultural development, but each station will have its own specific answer. Many stations describe what they stand for in a mission statement, a short text that describes why they do what they do.

**Participatory:** Just as all community radio stations have a common mission to support and contribute to the community, they also all have a common strategy that involves community participation at all levels – programming, operating and even financing the station. This can be exercised in a wide variety of ways depending on the specific nature of the station, its objectives, and the characteristics of the community.

Participation in programming can be assured with participatory production formats, by encouraging and supporting programme production by organisations from within the community, by broadcasting public forums, and generally by enabling the free and open exchange of views.

In most stations the community participates in the management and direction of the station, for example through a board of governors or directors with members representing various interests within the community.

Many communities support their stations with cash or in-kind contributions. Financial support can come from individuals, local businesses, community organisations, or local government. In some cases the community supplies the building the station is housed in and contributes its own “sweat capital” to build it.

### **Many definitions of community radio**

In addition to the common characteristics listed above, a given community medium will emphasise the importance of other characteristics. A rural radio station in northern Senegal may emphasise the practical service it provides by enabling people in its listening area to get messages to one another without having to travel for hours or even days; a station broadcasting to a linguistic minority in a big city may put emphasis in its cultural role; while a third station could define itself primarily by its role of ensuring that the poorest members of the community are able to express their concerns, or of promoting transparency and exposing corruption.

#### **Box 1: What can community radio do?**

It may seem abstract to say that community radio contributes to social, economic, cultural and political development. Concrete examples of how participatory communications projects change their communities can be found in the books *A Passion for Radio: Radio Waves and Community* (Girard 1993) and *Making Waves: Stories of Participatory Communication for Social Change* (Gumucio 2001). Both books are available on the internet. *A Passion for Radio* is at [www.comunica.org/passion/](http://www.comunica.org/passion/) and *Making Waves* is at [www.rockfound.org](http://www.rockfound.org).

Many examples of what community radio can do are found in the country reports. Some of these are:

- During roundtable programmes people can make suggestions for priority construction and development projects
- Interviews with agricultural experts can help introduce and evaluate new agricultural techniques
- Radio theatre, poetry and music can provide entertainment and feature local cultural initiatives

- Radio programming can support and extend community-level campaigns in an almost infinite variety of subjects such as environmental awareness, tuberculosis or malaria prevention and treatment, land mines awareness, reintegration of former combatants, refugee issues, and human rights...
- Personal and community announcements can be broadcast, allowing the radio station to serve as a community telephone or bulletin board
- Travelling health clinics, which often arrive in remote communities one day, wait a second day for word of their arrival to get around, and are only able to attend to people on the third day, can save considerable time by announcing their arrival in advance over the radio.
- Local authorities can be regularly interviewed to present their activities and receive feedback, thus promoting good governance and transparency
- Discussion programmes can examine the roles and rights of women and the changing nature of the family
- Local experts can provide education about health care and traditional medicines
- Radio can provide a forum for cultural exchange between communities, thus promoting understanding and peace
- And much more...

## THE COUNTRIES

Five countries were included in the final study, South Africa and Mali in Africa, Nepal in Asia, and Colombia and Peru in Latin America. In part they were selected to provide regional balance but also because each country has developed different models of community radio adapted to the local context and each model has its own strengths and weaknesses. Thus this report does not seek to identify an illusive *ideal* model for community radio, but to highlight specific good practices that illustrate how community radio can contribute to a variety of development goals.

In this section we will provide a brief snapshot of each country focusing on some of the critical factors that have contributed to the nature and utility of its community radio sector.

### Colombia



**Population:** 44.9 million  
**Urban population:** 72.4%  
**GDP per capita (PPP):** US\$7,526  
**Human Development Index:** 0.785  
**Adult literacy:** 92.8%, female 92.7, male 92.9  
**Life expectancy at birth:** 72.6 years  
**HIV Prevalence (15-49 years):** 0.6%  
**Per capita health expenditure:** US\$522  
**Telephone mainlines:** 19.5 per 100 population  
**Mobile subscribers:** 23.2 per 100 population  
**Internet users:** 8 per 100  
**Radio receivers:** 54.4 per 100 population  
**Television receivers:** 25.1 per 100 population  
**Share of wealth of richest 20%:** 62.7%  
**Share of wealth of poorest 20%:** 2.5%  
  
**RSF press freedom index:** 131 of 168  
**Number of community radio stations:** 850

Colombia is the 4<sup>th</sup> largest country in South America and the 3<sup>rd</sup> most populous in all of Latin America. It is a developing country with a moderately high per capita GDP and human development index. It is highly urbanised with more than 30 cities with populations greater than 100,000. It has well developed industries in textiles, food processing, oil, clothing and footwear, beverages, chemicals as well as important oil and coal reserves as well as nickel, gold, silver, platinum, and emerald mines. Despite relatively good economic indicators, distribution of wealth is highly unequal and almost half of Colombia's population lives below the poverty line.

Colombia has been in a state of low-intensity conflict during much of its modern history with the largest insurgent group, the FARC, being formed in the mid-1960s. Human rights violations are common, crime rates are high and the judicial system is widely perceived as ineffective. Largely a result of violence, crime and the impunity awarded by an ineffective judiciary, Reporters Without Borders's *Press Freedom Index* puts it in position 131 of 168 countries in 2006. In Latin America only Mexico (132) and Cuba (165) scored worse.

In the 1990s Colombia adopted a policy favourable to community radio, making one licence available in each municipality.<sup>4</sup> In addition to making licences available, the government provides assistance in the form of funds for training and assistance to community broadcasters and support for regional networks.

## Mali



**Population:** 13.1 million  
**Urban population:** 29.9%  
**GDP per capita (PPP):** US\$998  
**Human Development Index:** 0.333  
**Adult literacy:** 19.0%, female 11.9%, male 26.7%  
**Life expectancy at birth:** 48.1 years  
**HIV Prevalence (15-49 years):** 1.7%  
**Per capita health expenditure:** US\$39  
**Telephone mainlines:** 0.6 per 100 population  
**Mobile subscribers:** 3 per 100  
**Internet users:** 0.4 per 100  
**Radio receivers:** 15.3 per 100  
**Television receivers:** 2.9 per 100  
**Share of wealth of richest 20%:** 56.2%  
**Share of wealth of poorest 20%:** 4.6%

**RSF press freedom index:** 35 of 168  
**Approximate number of radio stations:** 175  
**Number of community radio stations:** 121

Mali is among the poorest countries in the world, with sixty-five percent of its land area desert or semi-desert and with a highly unequal distribution of income. About ten percent of the population is nomadic and some eighty percent of the labour force is engaged in farming and fishing. Mali is heavily dependent on foreign aid and vulnerable to fluctuations in world prices for cotton, its main export. In 1991, after 23 years of dictatorship, a military coup made way for democratic elections in 1992.

Since the return to democracy there has been a dramatic growth in Mali's mass media, particularly the press and radio. While there are many newspapers and magazines, they are rarely distributed outside of the urban areas and inaccessible to the majority of the population in a country with an illiteracy rate of about eighty percent. The first community radio station was founded in 1988, during the period of one party rule, but it was only after the coup that the sector flourished. More than 100 radio stations were set up in the first ten years after the coup and today there are some 121 community radio stations, many in rural areas, and forty-seven commercial stations. The state broadcaster, the Office de Radiodiffusion Télévision du Mali (ORTM), operates both national and regional stations.

While French is the official language it is not widely spoken. Mali's multi-lingual and multi-ethnic nature is reflected by its community radio stations, which broadcast primarily in local languages. It is common for stations to offer programmes in many languages.

<sup>4</sup> Cities with a population greater than 300,000 were initially excluded, but after years of legal challenges the government was obliged, in May 2007, to issue a call for proposals for community radio stations in the major urban areas.

Despite Mali's poverty, and in contrast with its dependency on foreign aid, all but eight of its 121 community radio stations were financed locally, generally with a local development tax and/or with support from a local NGO.

## Nepal



Nepal is among the poorest and least developed countries in the world with almost one half of its population living below the poverty line. Agriculture is the mainstay of the economy, and almost 85% of the population is rural. In 1990 Nepal established a multiparty democracy within the framework of a constitutional monarchy. Since 1990, and despite some notable stumbles, Nepal has enjoyed a process of increasing democracy.

Since 1993, when the first private daily newspaper was established, the government's media monopoly has been gradually eroded. The government maintained its monopoly on broadcasting until 1997 when, after a five-year wait, Radio Sagarmatha, Nepal's first community radio station was awarded a license.

Despite its late start, community radio in Nepal is spreading quickly. As of May 2007 there were twenty established stations with another sixty-five with licences in hand preparing to start broadcasts. Once all these eighty-five stations are on the air, 56 of the 75 districts in the country will have a community radio station and 70% of the population will be within reach of a community radio signal. Unlike community media, commercial stations are generally located in the urban centres, with twenty-eight of the thirty-six currently in operation serving the capital Kathmandu. Because only ten percent of the budget for the state radio network comes from government, its programming is mainly commercially-oriented and competes with the private stations for revenue.

Nepal's severely underdeveloped communication infrastructure, low literacy rate, and many languages<sup>5</sup> present a number of challenges that community radio is uniquely positioned to overcome.

**Population:** 26.6 million  
**Urban population:** 15.3%  
**GDP per capita (PPP):** US\$1,490  
**Human Development Index:** 0.526  
**Adult literacy:** 48.6%, female 34.9%, male 62.7%  
**Life expectancy at birth:** 62.1 years  
**HIV Prevalence (15-49 years):** 0.5%  
**Per capita health expenditure:** US\$64  
**Telephone mainlines:** 1.5 per 100 population  
**Mobile subscribers:** 0.7 per 100  
**Internet users:** 0.7 per 100  
**Radio receivers:** N/A  
**Television receivers:** 1.1 per 100  
**Share of wealth of richest 20%:** 54.6%  
**Share of wealth of poorest 20%:** 6.0%

**RSF Press freedom index:** 159 of 168\*  
**Private radio stations:** 36  
**Community radio stations:** 20

\*In its 2006 report Reporters Without Borders noted: *The "democratic revolution" and the revolt against the monarchy in April this year (2006) led immediately to more basic freedoms and the country should gain a lot of ground in next year's Index.*

<sup>5</sup> Nepali is the first language of less than half of the population and more than 100 languages are spoken.

## Peru



**Population:** 27.6 million  
**Urban population:** 72.4%  
**GDP per capita (PPP):** US\$5,678  
**Human Development Index:** 0.762  
**Adult literacy:** 87.7%, female 82.1%, male 93.5%  
**Life expectancy at birth:** 70.2 years  
**HIV Prevalence (15-49 years):** 0.6%  
**Per capita health expenditure:** US\$233  
**Telephone mainlines:** 7.4 per 100 population  
**Mobile subscribers:** 14.8 per 100  
**Internet users:** 11.7 per 100  
**Radio receivers:** N/A  
**Television receivers:** 19.9 per 100  
**Share of wealth of richest 20%:** 58.7%  
**Share of wealth of poorest 20%:** 3.2%

**RSF press freedom index:** 112 of 168  
**Total licensed radio stations:** ~2,000  
**Community radio stations:** ~200

Peru is a developing country with a moderate per capita income and human development index score. Nevertheless, 51.6% of the total population is regarded as poor, including 19.2% considered extremely poor. During the 1980s, the country faced a huge external debt, ever-growing inflation, a surge in drug trafficking and massive political violence. In 1990 Alberto Fujimori was elected president and during his presidency, the economy began to recover and the insurgency was quashed. However, his government became increasingly authoritarian and faced with accusations of electoral fraud, corruption and massive human rights violations Fujimori fled the country in 2000.

The radio situation in Peru is complex. In addition to 2,000 licensed radio stations, 1,500 of them established between 1990 and 2005, there are hundreds of unlicensed broadcasters. The latter include community and commercial stations that have simply not been able to obtain licenses because of the cost and bureaucratic complexity but most of them are informal commercial operations with cheap “jukebox” formats and little or no news or information.

There are an estimated 200 community radio stations, understood as stations that *de facto* or *de jure* belong to and are run by their communities. The licensed ones are officially either commercial or educational stations because, while Peru’s 2004 radio and television law officially recognises community radio, no community station has yet to receive a license.

Peru’s main language is Spanish, but an important segment of the population, perhaps as high as twenty percent, speak indigenous languages, the most important of which is Quechua. Many radio stations broadcast at least some programming in that language.



## South Africa



**Population:** 47.2 million  
**Urban population:** 58.8%  
**GDP per capita (PPP):** US\$11,192  
**Human Development Index:** 0.658  
**Adult literacy:** 82.4%, female 80.9%, male 84.1%  
**Life expectancy at birth:** 47.0 years  
**HIV Prevalence (15-49 years):** 18.8%  
**Per capita health expenditure:** US\$669  
**Telephone mainlines:** 9.4 per 100 population  
**Mobile subscribers:** 42.8 per 100  
**Internet users:** 7.8 per 100  
**Radio receivers:** 24.8 per 100  
**Television receivers:** 19.7 per 100  
**Share of wealth of richest 20%:** 62.2%  
**Share of wealth of poorest 20%:** 3.5%

**RSF press freedom index:** 44 of 168  
**Private radio stations:** 17  
**Community radio stations:** 152  
**Public radio stations:** 18 (includes 4 commercial)

By UN classification South Africa is a middle-income country with an abundant supply of resources, well-developed financial, legal, communications, energy, and transport sectors, a stock exchange that ranks among the top twenty in the world, and a modern infrastructure supporting an efficient distribution of goods to major urban centres throughout the region. South Africa is ranked 24th in the world in terms of GDP, corrected for purchasing power parity.

In many respects, however, South Africa is under-developed; advanced development is significantly localised around four urban areas and beyond these four centres, development is marginal and poverty reigns. Consequently the vast majority of South Africans are poor. South Africa has one of the highest rates of income inequality in the world. The white South African minority tends to be considerably wealthier than the rest of the population. This is partly attributed to the legacy of the apartheid system, and, increasingly, what many see as the failure of the current government. In the ten years since the ANC government took power, South Africa's United Nations Human Development Index fell dramatically, while it was steadily rising until the mid-1990s. Much of this could be attributed to the AIDS pandemic and the government's failure to take steps to address it.<sup>6</sup>

During the last years of the apartheid government many South Africans became aware of and began to prepare for the day when community radio would be allowed. These included both political exiles and local grassroots activists. Counting on the support of the government and the donor community and on the dedication of a large number of activists, community radio experienced rapid growth throughout the country.

Currently 152 of South Africa's 191 radio stations are community stations. The rest of the stations are more or less evenly divided between private commercial stations and the stations of the publicly-owned South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC). According to national surveys community radio reaches 6.5

<sup>6</sup> The first two paragraphs are largely extracted from Wikipedia's South Africa entry - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South\\_africa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_africa)

million people, with almost  $\frac{1}{4}$  of all radio listeners tuning into a community radio station at least once per week.





## THE ISSUES

This section presents the seven issues identified for this study, illuminates good practices in community radio development and operation, showcases instructive examples, and examines how and why they worked.

### Participatory Processes and Volunteers

*What are good examples of participatory processes in community radio that lead to active and sustained volunteerism from the communities?*

Volunteers are essential to community radio. They contribute their time, knowledge and experience within the station for a variety of reasons. Some want to learn about radio and communication. Others want to support their radio station or to share their knowledge and experience with the wider community. Still others volunteer at the radio station because it provides a forum where they can further their work as environmentalists, doctors, or human rights workers.

Whatever the motives, few community radio stations would be able to provide a service if it were not for volunteers' freely-offered labour and knowledge.

Volunteers are also the community's presence inside the radio station and an important mechanism for enabling the meaningful community participation in programming, operating and financing that is the essence of community radio.

#### Volunteers and paid staff

In all five countries studied a significant share of the people involved in community radio are volunteers, although the ratio of paid staff to volunteers can vary widely from country to country and from station to station. In South Africa it is estimated that in most stations volunteers account for five of every six workers (86%) while in Nepal volunteers account for only 45% of the 600 community radio workers nationwide. In Mali, Colombia and Peru volunteers account for the majority of community radio workers.

When analysing the ratio of volunteers to paid staff it is important to keep in mind that the ratios tell us little about the actual amount of work done by volunteers vs. paid staff or about their relative levels of responsibility or the value of their contributions. While data is not available from all countries, the Peruvian study provides insights that have resonance elsewhere.

*Among Peru's community radio stations the scope of volunteering is inversely proportional with the size, wattage (power) and coverage area of the station. The smaller the radio station (basically rural or marginal urban) the more important volunteers are, while in larger stations volunteers do not disappear, but they become more specialised. (Peru report page 9)*

Thus, in smaller stations volunteers take on the full range of tasks, from programme production and hosting to equipment maintenance to everyday administrative tasks, but in stations with more resources paid-staff take on a role of providing "infrastructure" while volunteers provide specialised "value-added" services. In the programming area, for example, staff duties in a large station include programme production, hosting and reporting, while volunteers will offer

expertise as, for example, thematic correspondents or commentators. Examples of these include a medical doctor with a regular health column, or a correspondent reporting from a specific neighbourhood or village.

The Peruvian study also compared the actual number of volunteers, staff and hours worked in two typical stations – Radio Cutivalú with fifteen paid staff members and Radio Chaski with three. As table 1 shows both stations have the same volunteer to staff ratio (8 volunteers per staff member) but the more specialised volunteers at Cutivalú work an average of only one hour per day while at Chaski the volunteers work an average of two hours per day. While the two radio stations have the same absolute volunteer to staff ratio, in terms of hours worked the volunteers at Chaski work 1 hour for every 1.5 hours of staff time while at Cutivalú an hour of volunteer time is matched by 3 hours of paid staff time.

Station	Volunteers		Paid Staff		Ratio	
	Number	Hours / day	Number	Hours /day	Number vols:staff	Hours vol:staff
<b>Cutivalú</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8:3</b>	<b>1:3</b>
<b>Chaski</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8:3</b>	<b>1:1.5</b>

*Table1: Volunteers and paid staff at two stations in Peru by total and by hours worked*

Overall the evidence shows that while volunteers are universally found in community radio, there is no ideal ratio of staff to volunteers. Indeed at least one of the stations included in this study, South Africa’s Jozi FM, prides itself on its fulltime staff of thirty-five with salaries ranging from US\$350 and US\$2100 per month and only takes on an occasional volunteer intern. However, Jozi FM is the exception to the rule and its no-volunteer model is more like that of a private commercial station than a community one.

More typical is the situation found in Colombia’s stations in which volunteers’ participation in the stations breaks down divisions between the station and the community, with positive effect.

*To the extent that community broadcasters do not have such a clear division between producers and audiences, because the audiences participate in the programming in many ways, there is a large flow of information, knowledge and shared interests between the station and the community. This has generated a very strong fabric of solidarity in the areas surrounding the stations, to the point that often, even among people who do not listen directly to the station, the mere fact that their town has one generates a sense of pride and belonging.*  
(Colombia report, p. 17)

### Types of volunteers

Two main types of volunteers can be identified in all countries: *direct volunteers* and *partnership volunteers*. The two types of volunteers are distinguished by whether their primary connection to the radio station is direct, i.e. an individual who volunteers at the station, or through a partner organisation such as a local NGO or government body that has a formal or informal agreement with the

station. The two types of volunteers are motivated by different factors and they relate to the station in different ways.

**Direct volunteers** are generally individuals from within the community who volunteer directly at the station. These volunteers are found at all levels of station activity – from programme production to policy definition. Direct volunteers are motivated by a wide range of factors, including an altruistic desire to help the community, a desire to learn about radio, or a personal interest in local music and culture.

*Their sentiment and goals are common due to similar geographical, cultural and national situations. Social harmony is based on sentiment, necessity and localness. They value coordination, not competition. Community radio is a cheap, simple and easy means for them to disseminate their initiatives to many at the same time. [They] are motivated by their concern with the problems faced by others and their enthusiasm and eagerness to contribute to public life. (Nepal study, page 10)*

Yet there are also situations when a direct volunteer's motives are inconsistent with the objectives of a community radio station. An example of this is when personal political or career ambitions collide with open and participatory programming policies.

*[Direct volunteers] are generally young people who want to make a career in radio and who have attained a certain level of education. They perform practically all tasks, assisting the full-time staff as well. They come to the radio "just to learn the trade" or because of their "love for radio" but their training takes longer than expected and often they take the radio station hostage, becoming a hard to circumvent obstacle. (Mali report, p.28)*

While Mali's model of village radio stations with few or no paid staff often results in a very close relationship with the community, it can also leave stations vulnerable to abuse and more than one station has gone through a period during which it was "captured" by volunteers and employed to serve personal financial or political ends. To avoid this many stations require volunteers to sign agreements that specify rights and responsibilities and define certain ethical standards. Surprisingly the Mali study was the only one that noted the existence of written agreements between stations and volunteers, even though drafting and agreeing to volunteer job descriptions and codes of ethics is considered good practice in volunteer organisations worldwide.

**Partnership volunteers** are those whose labour within the community radio station is primarily a result of an association with an NGO, profession, business or government agency outside of the station. They volunteer with the radio station but they are also volunteers or paid workers at a second organisation with specific skills, knowledge and interests. Examples of this type of volunteers include a staff member of an NGO working in local economic development, a social worker, an activist lawyer working for a legal aid service, a public health worker, or a scientist based at a government agricultural research and extension station. Although they are considered volunteers by the station in many cases their primary relationship is not with the station but mediated by the outside organisation and their primary commitment is to the specific area of expertise of the organisation. The station in these cases provides a communication

*infrastructure* enabling a direct link between expert volunteers and the broad community of listeners.

With direct volunteers the primary connection is between the station and the volunteer, while with partnership volunteers the connection is more complex, often stemming from relationships between the community radio station and other organisations working in the community.

**Box 2: Allied institutions at Radio Marañon**

Radio Marañon in the Andes mountain range in the north of Peru works with a number of institutions allied with its communication work. One of these is the *Vicaría del Medio Ambiente*, which coordinates a network of sixty volunteers who monitor and report on the environment in their own communities within the station's listening area. The volunteers of the *Vicaría's* network are trained in environmental issues and communication. They monitor the environment for contamination problems and contribute reports to a regular programme on the radio station. The *Pastoral de la Salud*, a network of 60 rural health workers, has a similar relationship with the community radio station.

Of course direct volunteers also have relations with other actors in the community and individual partnership volunteers often develop very strong personal commitment to the station. Nevertheless the two types of volunteers are different in that the first is usually the product of an agreement between the station and an individual while the latter results from an agreement between the station and an outside institution that generally guarantees a higher level of expertise, greater continuity and additional resources to support the volunteer's participation.

Both of the two main types of volunteers work in most community radio stations, but each type has different motivations, contributions and demands and requires different management styles. Table 2 looks at certain characteristics of the two types of volunteers.

	<b>Direct</b>	<b>Partnership</b>
<b>Advantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enthusiastic and motivated</li> <li>- Desire to learn radio</li> <li>- Member of the community and likely to have general knowledge of community needs/desires</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Specialised knowledge</li> <li>- Part of an organised group</li> <li>- May require fewer resources as the partner is responsible for motivation and financial rewards</li> <li>- More sustained volunteerism. The institution's commitment continues even if an individual volunteer does not</li> </ul>
<b>Disadvantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Motivation may not be inline with station needs</li> <li>- High turnover</li> <li>- Whom do they represent?</li> <li>- May not have specific expertise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Primary allegiance is not to the station</li> <li>- May put specific interest above community interest</li> </ul>

*Table 2: Some advantages and disadvantages of direct and partnership volunteers*

While most community radio stations use and value both direct and partnership volunteers, partnership volunteers often bring specific and valuable skills and

knowledge, require fewer resources and are more reliable and sustainable. In a certain way they can also be more representative of the community since partnership volunteers are “delegates” of organised groups or associations within the community and their projects and proposals grow out of the concerns of these sectors. While conventional media seek to maintain the illusion that their journalists are independent of movements and associations, in a radio station that seeks to be part of the community the presence of organised sectors of the community inside the station and on its airwaves gives authenticity to its voice. Further, the system of partnership volunteers spreads the burden of motivating, maintaining and rewarding and orienting them across numerous organisations instead of centralising it in the radio station.

Direct volunteers on the other hand choose to volunteer because they are enthusiastic and eager to learn. Whether they are natural communicators looking for an outlet, motivated by an interest in the technology, or want to learn radio in order to get a job, they are motivated to learn and develop the technical skills that a radio station needs. Other motivations are highly subjective and difficult to generalise about. Some are motivated by personal ambition – seeing the radio as a stepping stone toward a political career, or simply wanting to hear their own voice – others are inspired by a genuine desire to contribute to the community by getting its voices and issues on the air and attracting wider and deeper participation. Either way, direct volunteers are crucial to community radio and uniquely able to ensure that programming reflects the broad diversity of a community’s views and issues. Nevertheless, managing them can be complicated, as this South African example reminds us:

*Part of the challenge in Community Radio, is that when it was first introduced in South Africa, extensive lessons were drawn from the Australian, American and Canadian models to shape the South African Community Radio model. One of the aspects that were imported without any modification is the volunteering model of the sector. Vaaltar FM in the rural North West Province and many other stations are of the view that the current model is difficult to implement and manage in the South African context. The assumption that has and continues to be made is that all volunteers have their basic needs for food, shelter and clothing met from where ever they come from, whilst the reality is quite to the contrary. (South Africa report, p. 16)*

In spite of the effort sometimes required to train and support them, direct volunteers fulfil essential roles within stations. It is common to find excellent staff members who began as enthusiastic but untrained volunteers.

In practice it is not always simple to distinguish between traditional and partnership volunteers. In Colombia, for example, it is common to find volunteer collectives with the characteristics of both traditional and partnership volunteers. The collectives are informal groups that meet to produce a weekly radio programme. They get basic training, either from the station or from a third party such as an NGO. Most common in Colombia are groups of children or youth, but there are also collectives of women, disabled people, parents, artists, farmers, and others. While individual members of the collectives may be similar to traditional volunteers, the collectives themselves exhibit continuity and commitment and keep the weekly programs on the air for long periods of time. Colombian community radio stations value these collectives and a typical station in

Colombia has between two and ten of them. In addition to free airtime, they provide them with training and access to equipment and materials.

**Box 3: Community collectives in Colombia: Examples of direct and partnership hybrids**

**The Communication Collective “Pescao sobrero y tambó”** in Simití, Bolívar, – the only communication collective in the town – groups 15 boys and girls 6 to 16 years old who meet every week to produce a one hour show broadcast on Saturday afternoons. Very early in the morning they meet at a teacher’s home. This teacher stands by them and helps them, and everyone participates in the show’s pre-production: they prepare the script, select the music and take turns for reading the stories. They are organised into small group, each with responsibility for a segment of the show no longer than 5 minutes. In the afternoon, they go together to the radio studio and broadcast the live show.

The show has a big impact in the town. In the neighbourhoods where the children live, their friends and relatives put loudspeakers to the street so everyone can listen to the show. When the children return home they are greeted with loud cheers and applause, which is an good motivator for them.

The children’s shows deal with troubles at school and at home, campaigning for the environment, garbage disposal, pet care, sexual and reproductive health issues, advice on health issues, spelling and math contests and other interests.

**The Magdalena Medio Handicapped Collective** in San Vicente de Chucurí, is directed by a man who was, for a certain period of time, the director of the community radio station. He is a professional electrician and a big fan of radio. As a member of the disabled people’s collective, he motivated others to produce a show aimed at promoting a different image of the disabled and, in this way, to make them feel more integrated into the community. [The members of the collective] want to be considered as valuable community members, able to work and produce, as well as to contribute to community harmony with their show. In this town there are several production collectives corresponding to different groups: children, youth, theater groups, women, cocoa growers, etc. These collectives reflect a much more organised and participative community, and this can also be seen in the radio environment. (Colombia report, p. 13)

Many radio stations also accept student interns. These can bring new knowledge to the station but they rarely stay beyond a couple of months. Bush Radio in Cape Town, South Africa welcomes interns from Europe, North America and Australia as both a way of benefiting from new knowledge and of financing the station by charging them US\$500 per month.

**BOX 4: South Africa Radio Internships<sup>7</sup>**

Bush Radio, affectionately known as "The Mother of Community Radio in Africa", sustains itself through the support of committed people from around the world, who believe that everyone has the right to freedom of expression... and the airwaves.

One of the ways we are supported is through the South Africa Radio Internships - SARI. The project sees broadcasting students and seasoned professionals pay to help us move our democracy forward, while at the same time experiencing some of the wonders that Cape Town and the environs have to offer.

The fees paid by interns pays the project's general running costs, as well as a small stipend to young radio activists from the townships around Cape Town. There is no formal training in radio production available in South Africa at this time, a situation we aim to remedy by getting our fledgling **Broadcast Training Institute - BTI** accredited.

The idea is to get away from the addiction of donor funding and government handouts because both have their own, not so hidden, dangers.

<sup>7</sup> From the Bush Radio website at <http://www.bushradio.co.za/internships.htm>

Since we **don't encourage advertising**, your support in this programme will help us keep the flame of grassroots communication alive, while at the same time covering a future broadcaster's travel costs and a small stipend.

#### **Attachment Internships:**

Are you a broadcasting student in need of an internship overseas?

Do you want to gain some valuable experience alongside some of the most dedicated young media practitioners in South Africa?

Internships of up to three months are offered as a development opportunity to young broadcasting and communication scholars from all over the world. We place interns in our ever-busy News Department, the creative Production Department and with our popular On-Air Team.

On acceptance, you will receive a comprehensive induction manual and the name of the local trainee that will benefit from your presence and be your "buddy" for the duration of your stay.

We will help in finding you suitable and safe accommodation and provide you with airport pick-up and drop-off.

#### **Sabbatical for Media Professionals:**

- Are you a trained broadcaster who needs a break from the boring routine of network commercial radio?
- Do you wish you could fulfil those creative radio dreams you had when you first started out as a radio maker?
- Do you believe that radio can be used as an upliftment tool to better the lives of people in the developing world?

If the answer to these questions is "yes" ...please read on.

Established **professional radio broadcasters** are invited to spend up to 3 months at one of the most exciting little radio projects in the world\*.

Make the programmes you've always wanted to hear. Join committed broadcasters from around the world who gather at Bush Radio to produce meaningful and creative radio.

In February 2004, we worked alongside interns from Norway, France, The Netherlands, Canada and Sweden.

**Cost for internship is R 5000-00 per month (app. \$500 US)**

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\* "I have had quite a lot of contact with popular media in the United States, and elsewhere in the world, and have rarely come across achievements comparable to yours. I appreciated the vitality and seriousness as well as the very high level of professionalism and dedication of the staff and volunteers from all over the globe. What you are doing at Bush Radio is extremely important." - Noam Chomsky

#### **Roles of volunteers**

There are no limits to the roles that volunteers can play in a community radio station. In many stations volunteers work on both sides of the microphone, fulfilling programming, administrative, leadership and coordination functions. In general the smaller the community radio station, the broader the range of tasks taken on by volunteers and in many of the smallest stations even the station manager is a volunteer.

In larger stations, with more resources available and more ability to absorb partnership volunteers, the division between volunteers and paid staff is more apparent, with paid staff taking on a role of providing "infrastructure" and



coordination while volunteers, especially partnership volunteers, adopt more specialised roles that exploit their particular knowledge or expertise.

Thus, in the programming area, for example, staff duties in a large station include programme production, hosting and reporting, while volunteers will offer expertise as, for example, thematic correspondents or commentators – a medical doctor with a regular health column, or a correspondent from a specific neighbourhood or village.

Even in smaller stations the ideal situation is one in which staff take care of the essential coordination functions and volunteers provide support. This is the case with Radio Jamana in Mopti, Mali (Box 5).

**Box 5: Radio Jamana has seven paid staff members and 23 volunteers.** The four male and three female staff members are young and locally recruited, and for most of them working at the station is their first job. When hired they had no formal training in radio but they learned on the job and some of them have been able to take advantage of occasional workshops, seminars and short-term scholarships to raise their skill level.

The staff members are multi-talented and flexible, able to shift easily between producing, hosting a programme, fixing or maintaining studio and remote equipment, and reporting.

The station is organised into six departments – management, programming, advertising sales, news, accounting and secretarial services, and technical.

Among the 23 volunteers there are both traditional and partnership volunteers. Like station staff, volunteers take on a wide variety of tasks and there are volunteers working in each of the station's six departments. Some traditional volunteers seem to be at the station almost daily, while other resource persons only visit when they have a programme to do.

The paid staff members who are responsible for the coordination of the six departments. By taking care of the coordination, the paid staff enable volunteers to focus on tasks that either interest and motivate them or those that maximise the knowledge or expertise they have to offer.

### Volunteer recruitment, training and incentives

Volunteers find their way into existing community radio stations via a number of avenues:

1. Most direct volunteers enter spontaneously, simply visiting the station and offering their services. They are not actively recruited, although the station may broadcast general announcements inviting volunteers;
2. Partnership volunteers come to the station via an external association that is already a station partner – and NGO, youth group, etc.;
3. NGOs and other associations approach the station seeking airtime and to establish ongoing partnerships;
4. The station actively seeks a partnership with an NGO with a specific area of expertise;
5. The station actively searches for an individual with a specific area of expertise.

Basic training of some kind is usually provided for volunteers. In many of Peru's stations, for example, this first training is taken seriously and for a period of a few weeks to two or three months the new recruit works alongside one or more experienced colleagues (either paid and volunteer). Additionally stations organise



periodic workshops and seminars, generally led by senior staff, to evaluate skills and needs and to provide more theoretical training. Some stations have developed basic training packages or manuals. Pairing the new volunteers with experienced members of the station has the additional advantage of introducing them to the station's "culture" and value system and helps to quickly identify incompatible volunteers.

In South Africa the Open Society Foundation sponsored the development of a *Community Radio Manual* in 1999, about the same time that the first permanent community radio licences were being issued and four years after the first temporary ones were granted. The manual served not only to support station-level training in programming, production and management, but also introduced and advanced an understanding of community radio and its history, practices and objectives in South Africa and worldwide. No comparable material was found at the national level in the other countries studied.

Training is a stated priority for all of the countries in the study and all of them have had important initiatives in the domain. However, except for the occasional workshop report there is little data that indicates to what extent these initiatives have benefited or been directed at volunteers.

Colombia has developed a rigorous practice over the years. When the first round of licenses were issued in 1995 little formal attention was paid to training and, as a result, many of the stations closed down or lost their community nature when faced with the difficulty of surviving with little knowledge and experience. With the second and third rounds of concessions the Ministry of Communication dedicated significant resources to contract regional universities to provide initial training for every new station. In addition to technical skills, the training provided to the stations has covered legal aspects, administration, financing and an orientation to the role and nature of communities and community radio. While there has not been a formal evaluation of the impact of this training, the Colombia report attributes it with the emergence of a deep understanding of community radio among those who work with it.

*[E]ven if this is a very recent process, and these second and third generation community radios have not been assessed or followed up yet, it should be noted that a community radio "culture" has become evident in the meetings, seminars and workshops where the people are aware of the law and regulations, and concepts such as the Style Guide and Programming Council are considered part of a station's normal operation. (Colombia report, p. 9)*

Ilitha Community Radio in South Africa has developed an elaborate process for recruiting, selecting and training community volunteers. First the station broadcasts public notices announcing that it is recruiting volunteers and inviting applicants to contact the station and sign up. The volunteer positions advertised correspond to identified needs within the station: if there is a shortage of journalists but enough technicians, the station advertises for journalists and not technicians. The public notices often specifically seek to encourage women to apply, since station policy puts a strong emphasis on the provision of service to rural women. Normally the response to the invitation is greater than the need for volunteers so the station then contacts the applicants individually and invites them to the station for an interview before selecting those that best fill its needs. The selected volunteers are then provided with in-house basic radio training and, finally, the most promising among them are given the opportunity to get training

provided by a number of external service providers such as the National Community Radio Forum (NCRF), the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism (IAJ) and the National Electronic Media Institute of South Africa (NEMISA).

Ilitha Community Radio's recruiting and training practices offer a number of advantages:

- The station initiates the recruiting process when it needs volunteers;
- The station directs the recruiting to people with the skills and interests it requires and also to people from particular sectors that it is interested in recruiting;
- The selection process allows screening of applicants and selection of volunteers based on station and community priorities and on volunteers' motivations, skills, etc.;
- By recruiting in waves the station can make better use of resources by organising basic training courses for a groups rather than individuals;
- The possibility of receiving external training provides volunteers with additional incentives;
- The selection process is ongoing and benefits of external training are optimised.

Among the externally available training in South Africa is a *Community Radio Station Management Skills Program* developed and offered by NCRF, IAJ and MAPPP SETA (Media, Advertising, Publishing, Printing and Packaging Sector Education and Training Authority). The programme designed to help community radio practitioners be better equipped to manage, develop content and generate revenue for their stations. The programme provides volunteers with a basic allowance to cover costs of participation. The Open Society Foundation supported the production of training manuals and curricula and made them freely available for download from the internet.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to training, many radio stations offer financial incentives to cover transportation and other costs. In South Africa for example, this can range from around US\$40 to as high as US\$500 per month while fulltime staff members are paid from US\$350 to as much as US\$2100 per month.

## Conclusions

Without volunteers' time, knowledge and experience community radio would not exist. Volunteers are the community's presence inside the radio station and an important mechanism for enabling the meaningful community participation in programming, operating and financing that is the essence of community radio.

There are two main types of volunteers –direct and partnership– and they must be managed differently. Both types can help make a station financially possible, while contributing to the quality and diversity of its programming. Partnership volunteers provide stations with a high level of expertise in its programming and they come with the backing of an outside institution. While there is a large body of knowledge and experience worldwide about volunteer management, in general

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<sup>8</sup> Available at <http://www.osf.org.za/>

it appears that community radio has failed to make adequate use of it. The cases studied indicate that there is little understanding of motivations and incentives and in only in a very few cases is there evidence of written agreements setting out rights and responsibilities of volunteers or of written job descriptions for volunteers.

Among the good practices identified in the national reports are:

- Systematic recruitment procedures that help ensure that a station attracts volunteers with profile that fit its needs;
- Written agreements between stations and volunteers that clearly define rights and responsibilities.
- Basic training provided as part of a “buddy system”
- Basic training that includes both hands on learning and theoretical study;
- Basic training that is accompanied with orientation to the general concepts and values of community radio and of the individual station;
- When advanced training is available from external suppliers it can be used to develop skills but also provides an incentive for volunteers;
- Nationally produced training materials that can be readily adapted by local stations.

## Relationship with the Community

*How have community radio stations ensured that they are the voice of the community?*

*While listeners of commercial radio are able to participate in the programming in limited ways –via open line phone-in shows or by requesting a favourite song, for example– community radio listeners are the producers, managers, directors, evaluators and even the owners of the stations. (Girard 1992, p. 2)*

The meaningful participation of the community is a defining characteristic of community radio. Participation in community radio goes beyond the “talk radio” format; members of the community produce programmes, define station policy, manage their station and even finance it. Participation can be exercised in a wide variety of ways depending on the nature and objectives of the station, and the characteristics of the community.

Community participation in a community radio station is much more than a measure of a station’s internal democracy. Participation is both the purpose and the strength of community radio. It is the purpose because community radio seeks to provide a forum for the community and it is its strength because it is through participation that people and their organisations turn their knowledge, experience, research, opinions, culture and skills into the station’s programming.

It is notable that in many countries, and especially in rural areas, it is common for radio stations to take the name of the local community and become “The Voice of ...”. By identifying itself so strongly with the community the station sends the clear message that it belongs to the community. It is their station, their spokesperson and they have a say in what it does and a responsibility to make sure it does it well.

## Programming

The Nepal study looked at content differences between commercial and community media and found that commercial media's information sources were limited to the traditional ones – press releases, press conferences, promotional events, large public events, official spokespersons, and so on. Community radio, on the other hand, makes active use of field reports, interviews with ordinary people, testimonies, and other techniques that privilege “people as content”.

Communities participate in programming in many ways.

**The community is present in the programmes.** Community radio programming is primarily locally produced and about local people and issues. This is in stark contrast to television where the resource-intensive nature of production imposes limits on the amount of local programming.

**The programmes are present in the community.** Community members do not only listen to the radio, the station goes out to the community. In Ghana, for example, programmes are often recorded in open village meetings and the effect of hearing one's own and one's neighbours' voices on the airwaves has been profoundly empowering.

**Participatory programme formats** including talk shows, round tables, reading listener letters on the air, *vox populi*, broadcasts from public locations, etc. are very simple ways of facilitating community participation. People comment on the issues of the day, on the station's programming, or they just send greetings to friends and family members. This kind of service is very valuable, especially in rural areas where people are isolated from each other and the radio is the only medium that brings them together and contributes a sense of community. Participatory formats are a potent vehicle for communities to develop public opinion.

**Community volunteers help make the programmes** as we discussed in the previous section on volunteers.

**NGOs and other types of civil society associations produce and broadcast their own programmes** using the community radio's production and broadcast facilities.

**Feedback and participatory evaluation mechanisms** are widely used. These include on-air mechanisms including the participatory programme formats mentioned above but they also include “open house” days when community members are invited to visit the station and meet with staff and volunteers and public meetings at which listeners and station representatives evaluate the programming.

### **A Programming *Imbizo***

In August 2006, Vaaltar FM in South Africa's North West Province undertook to hold an ‘imbizo’ (gathering), whereby members of the community and other interested parties were asked to provide inputs on what types of programs and issues they would like the station to focus on. The communities raised a variety of issues, but what was most critical was the provision of relevant and usable information in health matters and economic development or job creation projects. The station took this mandate very seriously, and realigned its programming while training its presenters to be responsive to the issues raised. The station has since realised a 100% leap in its audience ratings. This was as a direct response to the programming ‘imbizo’.

**Research.** In South Africa all community radio stations are included in market surveys conducted by the South African Advertising Research Foundation and have access to the results. These surveys, typically based on diaries distributed to a sample of households and collected a week or two later are designed for use by advertisers, tend to exaggerate audience size and are so general that they are not useful for decisions about programmes. (List 2006).

Some individual stations do more qualitative research involving listener clubs and structured interviews, and some external agencies have conducted impact assessments, but these remain isolated initiatives. Apart from South Africa's market surveys no sustained audience research initiatives at either the national or local level were found in any of the countries studied. Nevertheless, materials developed by elsewhere are available for stations interested in embarking on more appropriate audience research. Dennis List's *Audience Dialogue* website is useful as is Arthur van den Elzen's Spanish-language guide to audience surveys, *Preguntando a Nuestro Pueblo*.

**Community representatives develop programme policy and programming schedules.** Enabling the community to develop programme policy and programming schedules is unique to community radio and is done both in formal and informal ways.

In Colombia community participation in programming is a legal requirement stipulated in the community radio legislation. All community radio stations are required to have a "Style Guide" and a community Programming Council (junta de programación).

The Style Guide is a public document that defines the policies, principles and criteria of the station in matters such as audience rights, not inciting violence or discrimination and guaranteeing pluralism. By making their policies public in the Guide a station commits to a high level of transparency and community members can challenge it if, for example, the station deviates from its own programming policy.

According to Colombia's community radio legislation the Programming Councils are "charged with the formulation and monitoring of policies, plans and programmes related to programming and for overseeing the compliance of the goals of the [community broadcasting] service."<sup>9</sup> The law also stipulates that organisations in the community, including municipal institutions, have the right to nominate representatives to the Programming Council and that the director of the radio station will be the Council's chair.<sup>10</sup>

### Ownership, participation and control

Who are the owners of community radio stations? In the five countries included in this study we have found a number of different answers to that question. There are stations owned by NGOs, by cooperatives, by church parishes, by

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<sup>9</sup> Ministry of Communications, Colombia, Decree 1981, 2003, Article 2 - [http://www.mincomunicaciones.gov.co/mincom/src/user\\_docs/Archivos/normatividad/2003/Decretos/D1981d%202003.doc](http://www.mincomunicaciones.gov.co/mincom/src/user_docs/Archivos/normatividad/2003/Decretos/D1981d%202003.doc)

<sup>10</sup> Ministry of Communications, Colombia, Decree 1981, 2003, Article 3 - [http://www.mincomunicaciones.gov.co/mincom/src/user\\_docs/Archivos/normatividad/2003/Decretos/D1981d%202003.doc](http://www.mincomunicaciones.gov.co/mincom/src/user_docs/Archivos/normatividad/2003/Decretos/D1981d%202003.doc)

municipalities and by associations or coalitions specifically formed to establish a radio station. In some cases the legal ownership of the station has either been forgotten or was never clearly established.

More important than the legal status of the body that “owns” the station are its governance and membership structure, which can either restrict meaningful participation to a small group or open it up to the whole community. Four stations in Nepal, two of them owned by NGOs and two by cooperatives, provide good examples.

**Radio Sagarmatha** in Kathmandu was Nepal’s first radio station and is owned by an NGO belonging to the Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalists (NFEJ). The 120 journalists and environmental expert members of the NFEJ hold annual elections to choose its executive committee which in turn selects the station’s board of directors.

Young Star Club, another NGO, owns **Solu FM** located in the mountainous district of Solukhumbu. Unlike the NFEJ, membership in Young Star Club is open to the public and it has 300 members. To ensure as broad community representation as possible, a Radio Council has been established as the supreme body of the station and the Club only has three of the 45 members of the council with the rest consisting of representatives of ethnic organisations, representatives of all political parties, distinguished individuals from the community, a representative of the district NGO federation, etc. The Council chooses elects an executive charged with developing the vision, goals and policies of the station.

The Lumbini Information and Communication Cooperative owns **Radio Lumbini**. According to its regulations, membership in the cooperative is open to all, but in practice it is limited because membership costs \$615, twice as much as the national per capita income. Its 220 members elect the cooperative’s board, which is also the station’s board, for a three-year term.

Another cooperatively owned station, **Radio Rupakot**, based in the Khotang district where indigenous people are the majority, provides a model that contrasts sharply with Bijaya FM. The station ran a membership drive aimed at signing up one member from each family in its broadcast area. Aided by its low US\$1.50 membership fee the station signed up 1,200 members in the first two months of the drive, a number that continues to grow. Radio Rupakot then divided its coverage area into 20 representative zones with each one electing a representative to the Council, the station’s supreme body. The Council in turn elects an executive to direct the day-to-day activities of the station.

Often *de jure* ownership is in the hands of a local association or NGO but *de facto* ownership is in the hands of the community. This is the case of most stations in small communities: the licence may be held by an NGO but the station is dependent on the community for money, office and studio space, volunteers, content and legitimacy. In return the community insists on controlling *its* radio station. The NGO only holds the licence on behalf of the community and the most important decisions are taken at open annual general meetings where the programming schedule, budget, repairs or improvements to station facilities, and proposals for new programmes are fervently discussed. The annual general meetings elect the management committees or boards and proposals for station managers are submitted for approval. The community and its representatives clearly manage and control their stations.

This is clearly the case in the majority of Mali's stations but is also common in other countries where stations are often housed in buildings provided free of charge by the community or supported by cash or in-kind donations from individuals, organisations and local authorities.

In its legislation Colombia tried to ensure broad community participation by requiring every community radio station to have a board of directors and a Programming Council to oversee the programming and operation of the station. A community radio station that follows the procedures set out in the legislation:

- holds an annual general meeting to elect the governing bodies;
- at the meeting the outgoing bodies provide a public report of what they have done
- following the meeting the incoming bodies prepare and present a work plan and a budget within one month of the election.

According to coordinators of Colombia's regional networks, this works in 50 or 60% of the stations. In the rest the government's inability to monitor and enforce the law combined with the low level of organisation of many communities has resulted in stations that are effectively controlled by a single institution or individual and used for their own purposes. This is the case with certain stations owned by churches or educational institutions, or cases where individuals have manipulated the system in order to get a commercial station disguised as a community one.

## Conclusions

- Community participation in programming is highly valued by community radio stations.
- Community radio stations in all five countries use innovative participatory formats.
- Community participation is not restricted to programming. There are many examples of community participation in stations' decision-making structures. In Colombia stations are legally required to have community members on their Boards and Programming Councils and many of them do. However, even in the other countries where there is no legal requirement, most community stations have adopted structures that include elected decision-making bodies and broad community participation in non-programming aspects of a station's operation.
- As important as the legal status of the body that "owns" the station are its governance and membership structures, which can either restrict meaningful participation to a small group or open it up to the whole community.
- Communities that provide support for community stations can insist that the station be responsive to listener concerns through mechanisms such as the annual general meetings and independent elected boards of directors.
- Good enabling legislation and regulation are necessary but insufficient for ensuring community control of community radio.
- Community radio can help a community organise itself, but if the community does not have a certain level of organisation and interest, the station can be taken over to serve the narrow interests of organised individuals or groups.

## Exertion of Rights

*How has community radio helped people and communities press successfully for their civil and human rights, advocate successfully with officials, protect themselves from abuse, and become legally and socially empowered?*

Participatory media and communication of the kind afforded by community radio is one of the most powerful ways of ensuring that people are aware of their rights and able to exert, defend and extend them. The country studies highlighted three overlapping strategies employed by community radio stations: **educating** about rights, **monitoring** the status of rights, and **advocating** for recognition and extension of rights.

### Educating about rights

Perhaps the greatest impediment to ensuring respect for human rights is the low level of awareness of them. Many community radio stations and networks, working alone or with others, actively contribute to human and civil rights awareness. Community radio is a good choice for rights awareness because, as a recent evaluation of its social impact concluded, it is particularly effective at ensuring inclusion of poor and marginalized populations, precisely the ones most likely to suffer violations of their human and civil rights. (AMARC, 2007).

Consider these examples from the country studies:

- Vaaltar Community Radio in **South Africa**, together with the Media Training Centre (MTC), and local community organisations, are developing an HIV/AIDS awareness program. This program has a special focus on young and vulnerable woman in the community who are not able to negotiate safe sex with their partners at all times. The program is aimed at empowering young women to take a stand and protect their rights to say no. The station is playing a central role in training volunteers from community organisations dealing with HIV/AIDS to use the platform provided by the station to talk about these issues and help young women exercise their rights and to seek help.
- Also in **South Africa**, Soweto's Jozi FM has been involved with the Gay and Lesbian Organisation (GLO) over the years to put gay and lesbian rights issues in the public domain. The collaboration has helped GLO to dispel some of the homophobic stereotypes and myths prevalent in society at large and provided a platform for gays and lesbians to discuss their own rights.
- The Supreme Court of **Nepal** ruled four years ago that the state should provide free education to people with disabilities. However, because many disabled people did not know their rights, some district governments ignored their obligations. Dang, in Nepal's mid-west region, was one of the districts in which the ruling was ignored. Radio Swargadwari raised this issue frequently, informing and educating the disabled about their rights until the district government succumbed and agreed to provide them with free education.
- Fundamental civil rights guaranteed by **Nepal's** Constitution were suspended during the 15-month regime of King Gyanendra, who seized power in a coup in February 2005. Despite a ban on the broadcast of news, the community radios found creative ways to advocate for civil and



human rights by broadcasting educational programmes about the rights enshrined in the constitution, processes for suspending rights, articles of the Geneva Convention, and international treaties and covenants ratified by Nepal. They also frequently broadcast notices about the ban on news and the consequent infringement of the right to information. This helped ensure that during the 15 months that their rights were suspended Nepal's people did not forget their rights – they actually became more aware of them.

- As part of its continuing democratic reforms, the government of Mali developed PRODEJ (Programme Décennal de Développement de la Justice)<sup>11</sup>, a ten-year legal reform programme. The community radio stations have been given the role of disseminating information about the programme and URTEL, the national community radio association, sits on its steering committee. Since journalists are not usually well equipped to understand complex legal matters and to explain them in a way that people can understand, PRODEJ provides training to familiarise community radio journalists with the law, how it works, legal language, and how to explain it.

As a result of their training, community radio stations were able to run programmes explaining environmental rights to community members. Armed with a new understanding of their rights many villages galvanized around the issue of deforestation and effectively defended their forests from lumber companies.

- In times of conflict it is more important than ever that ordinary people and combatants are aware of human rights. However, for community radio stations in **Colombia's** conflict zones to talk about "human rights" or "international humanitarian law" is to arouse the suspicion and perhaps anger of one or the other armed groups. Unable to deal with these issues in an open way, but faced with an urgent need to have them known and understood, community broadcasters have invented many ways of educating about human rights without actually naming them. For example, a group in the Montes de María produced a series of programmes in which they spoke of the rights of many groups in society – children, women, senior citizens, fishermen – without ever mentioning "human rights", as if they were totally unrelated. With this strategy they have been able to educate people about their rights and even children in the area have a clear understanding of their rights.

Effective rights education can be ongoing and oriented to developing a general knowledge of and respect for rights (the cases of Mali and Colombia) or it can be targeted to deal with the rights of specific groups (the young women in South Africa or the case of the disabled people in Nepal).

The case of the rights awareness campaign undertaken during the 15 month suspension of civil rights in Nepal is exceptional in that its apparent focus on raising rights awareness rather than denouncing violations was in effect a creative way of dealing with a particularly repressive set of measures. News broadcasts were banned and freedom of expression restricted. Soldiers were permanently posted in all community and independent radio stations to enforce the ban and would have intervened if the programmes had taken an aggressive stance denouncing the measures. By focusing on education rather than confrontation,

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.justicemali.org/>

Nepal's community radio stations adopted an effective "velvet" approach rather than face increased repression.

### Monitoring and advocating for rights

In addition to educating about rights, community radio stations often work alongside other organisations in more targeted ways. These include monitoring rights, denouncing violations of rights, and organising or supporting campaigns to ensure rights are respected or extended to new areas.

Three examples from Peru show different ways a community radio can play an advocacy role.

1. When Jaén province in the north of Perú experienced a sharp increase in violent crime, the police were slow to react to guarantee the security of the population. Various community organisations approached Radio Marañon, a community station with a commitment to social issues and development, and Marañon agreed to broadcast information about the increase in crime and the inaction of the police and to disseminate the call for a march for peace. There was a strong turnout on the day of the march and most of the other community radio stations in the province suspended their own programming in favour of re-transmitting Radio Marañon's live broadcast. Faced with province-wide protest the police were forced to take measures to address the crime wave.
2. Representatives of indigenous communities in the Peruvian jungle visited Radio La Voz de la Selva in Loreto to complain about an oil company that was contaminating the Corrientes River. The station convinced officials at the Ministry of Health in Lima to conduct blood tests on local people, but then had to fight to have the results released. Despite showing levels of lead and cadmium in the blood, the company refused to discuss the matter until La Voz de La Selva contacted the Coordinadora Nacional de Radio (CNR – the national community radio association) which made the issue a national one and forced negotiations between the company, the government and the indigenous people. The three parties then asked the radio station to sit in on the negotiations and to broadcast information about them.
3. Twelve community radio stations in Peru's northern coastal region are working together with civil society organisations and local and regional governments in a project designed to improve the lives of women and youth in the region. Based on the results of a study that identified some of the key problems they face, the radio stations and other partners defined a series of activities. One of these was a weekly radio programme, carried on all the stations, in which the rights of women and youth are discussed. The radio programme allows women and youth to participate in identifying problems, proposing solutions and negotiating them with local authorities. A number of municipal governments have already made positive changes to municipal ordinances and it is hoped that regional governments, which work at a slower pace, will begin to make changes soon. Even if there were no immediate changes, the initiative succeeded in making women and youth conscious of their own situation and empowered them to propose changes.

The three examples above exhibit different levels of complexity. In the example of Radio Marañon the station simply opened up its airwaves to a group of civil society organisations and exposed the failures of local authorities, but in the other two examples the stations became actors in more complex processes. La Voz de La Selva, for example, took on multiple roles:

- It was a forum for lodging a complaint about a violation of rights;
- It lent its influence to convince health officials in the capital to conduct blood tests on the residents;
- When the health officials refused to release the blood tests, the station used investigative journalism techniques to get them released;
- It focused national attention on the struggle of a poor isolated community when it worked with the CNR's national network;
- Finally, La Voz de La Selva was an eyewitness to the negotiations, ensuring the community was present in the room, making sure everyone could know what was proposed and agreed to, and guaranteeing transparency.

In the third example the radio programme empowered both participants and listeners, raising people's awareness of their situation and their rights and encouraging them to develop their own proposals to be negotiated with local authorities.

The example of Nepal's widows' movement (see Box 6) demonstrates how community radio can play various roles at different stages in the development of a movement: Raising awareness of the subject, providing an on-air forum for disempowered groups to "meet" and talk about their problems and to propose action, and, finally, accompanying the groups and generating understanding and solidarity in society at large.

**Box 6: Community Radio and the Widows Movement in Nepal**

In Nepal widows are expected to live out their lives in mourning. They do not generally remarry and are not allowed them to wear colourful clothes or jewellery. Young widows are deprived of care and love in the society, and subjected to mental and social abuse.

The number of young widows has increased significantly in Dang district in the mid-western region due to the 10-year old insurgency. Radio Swargadwari began a program to draw attention to the situation and problems of the young widows. Not content with merely broadcasting information about the plight of widows, in September 2002 an interviewee appealed to widows like her to get organized and to demand their rights.

Soon afterwards the programme initiated a campaign urging widows to wear red clothes, bangles and red tika (worn on the forehead as an ornament by Hindu women); all banned for widows in Nepalese society, calling for a demonstration. One hundred and fifty widows from the district wore red clothes.

Radio Swargadwari also urged the public to support the widows' campaign. Soon other organizations came forward to support the movement. Now around three thousand widows are organized under the Widows Concern Center, an organization of the widows in the district.

"The movement instilled confidence in the widows and the widows are now perceived more positively by society," said the Center's head, Huma D.C.. "We are thankful to Radio Swargadwari for its contribution to changing the social status of widows".

What distinguishes the widows' case from other examples of social organising is that the use of community radio first enabled and then accelerated the

organisation of a disempowered group that had no previous social infrastructure. In the first instance, the airwaves of Radio Swargadwari constituted the only “place” where widows could even listen to someone talk about their common problems. Later the programme became a forum for organising, so the widows could discuss and propose solutions, and finally it allowed them to call on the solidarity of other people and organisations in the district.

While the example of the widows’ movement shows how community radio can help the most disempowered sectors organise, it is also common for community radio stations to work with organised sectors of the community. Indeed, one of the strengths of community radio in educating about or advocating for rights is precisely that it does not work alone but in partnership with other organisations. In some cases, the radio stations and the campaigners jointly draft the editorial policy and design campaigns, while in others the stations merely provide studios, airtime and technical assistance. In all cases, the local community itself is the main source of content and the inspiration for the campaign grows out of the community’s concerns, not the radio station’s. The community radio station role in these campaigns is not so much to lead as to make its talent and infrastructure available to organisations and activists in order to act as an accelerator and catalyst for change.

## Conclusions

Participatory media and communication of the kind afforded by community radio is one of the most powerful ways of ensuring that people are aware of their rights and able to exert, defend and extend them. The country studies highlighted three overlapping strategies employed by community radio stations: **educating** about rights, **monitoring** the status of rights, and **advocating** for recognition and extension of rights.

When it comes to advocating for rights, community radio can provide social and communication infrastructure for even the most disempowered of groups. This accelerates their efforts to achieve social justice.

The most effective campaigns are not undertaken by community radio stations, but arise organically from within the community. Nevertheless, by providing a forum for discussion community radio stations play an important catalysing role, helping communities to better articulate their concerns and propose solutions and common actions.

## Accountability and Good Governance

*What are good examples of community radio programs being used to press successfully for better delivery of public services or investments, and for more government transparency and accountability?*

*A free, independent and pluralistic media environment, offering the means and incentives for the widest participation, can have a profound influence on people’s opportunities to access information and services, to understand and be able to exercise their rights, to participate in decisions that affect their lives and to hold to account those in positions of power and responsibility. (Duer et al, 2007 - Broadcasting, Voice and Accountability)*

Community radio has at least four roles with regards accountability and good governance:

1. An advocacy role in which it defends the interests of the population;
2. A role as a public forum for monitoring and discussing issues related to accountability and governance;
3. A role as a partner of government seeking to inform and involve the community;
4. A role as a provider of services that result in a better delivery of public services in domains such as health and education.

The **advocacy** role is similar to that discussed previously in the section on exertion of rights and either within magazine format programmes or with special programmes that specifically deal with complaints, community radio stations provide a platform for exposing abuses.

Magazine format programmes simply dedicate part of the community radio station's airtime to receiving listener phone calls or reading letters. Some of the comments inevitably involve complaints about government, ranging from inefficiencies to corruption and abuse. In the case of serious complaints the station's journalists might follow up the matter with local authorities. Often the complaints are not about serious problems but just a lack of information. In such cases the radio station itself might resolve the problem by putting people in touch with the appropriate officials or providing some information, or a local official might call the radio station to respond to the listener's concern.

Specialised programmes such as Radio Jamana Mopti's (Mali) popular weekly *C'est pas normal* (It's not normal) invite listeners to call the station to make complaints about problems they encounter – government inefficiency, corruption, and government offices that are closed when they are supposed to be open are among the complaints received weekly. Government officials and public employees know that they are being watched and consequently are more careful about their work.

These programmes are often very popular but the format can be abused when, for example, complaints are unfounded or when sensationalism becomes the objective. Jozi FM in Soweto, South Africa takes the format to extremes with its extremely popular weekly programme *Cheaters*. The two-hour programme focuses on the most sensationalist scandals, preferring to air a colourful story about a cheating husband over a complaint about the petty corruption of government officials.

Humour can be part of a good advocacy strategy, keeping listeners interested and corrupt or incompetent officials off-balance. When radio stations were prohibited from doing news programming following the coup in Nepal, Radio Sagarmatha's director, Mohan Bista, decided to get serious in an unusual way: "There were no restrictions on broadcasting comedy, as long as it wasn't political, so we decided to ask one of our regular comedians to sing the news in a comedy style familiar to Nepalis instead. They let us do that for a lot longer."<sup>12</sup>

Mali's Radio Bamakan also employs humour. Its programme *Kouyaté an Samaké* is a parody of the weekly briefing sessions offered by a government spokesperson

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<sup>12</sup> Radio Censorship: From pirate radio to voice of a nation, in The Independent online edition 25 June 2007. <http://news.independent.co.uk/media/article2702425.ece>

after cabinet meetings. With clever language and a caustic style the station's mock spokesperson reminds listeners of what is, and what is not, on the government's agenda.

Going a step further than complaints, some stations provide **forums** for discussion and debate among citizens and officials. On Radio Diaka Kènè Yeleen, also in the Mopti region, *Débat dans les villages* (Debate in the villages) identifies a problem each week and invites everyone to comment on it. The programme is recorded in a public space in a different village each week. It is highly participatory and above all educational as people learn about their rights, the services they are entitled to, and that they can contribute to finding solutions to their own problems.

Community radio stations can also **partner with government** to give officials a chance to tell about their achievements and present new plans and projects.

South Africa's Government Communications Information System (GCIS) is a government agency charged with a mandate to provide leadership in government communication and to ensure that the public is informed of government's activities. The GCIS runs an interactive 'government meets the people' programme called *Imbizo*, a Zulu word for a public meeting called to discuss issues of importance to the community. In this case the *imbizo* is a forum where the President visits a local community and holds a public meeting where people can raise issues about the government. Community radio stations partner with GCIS to provide coverage of the meetings, often broadcasting them in their entirety.

Many of Colombia's community radio stations provide coverage of annual meetings where local governments provide an accounting of their activities. The programmes are increasingly popular with government officials, who appreciate being able to tell of their accomplishments and the problems faced. They are also popular with communities as they learn that they can monitor their governments, participate in the definition of priorities in a concrete way and demand clear and complete information.

These government programmes can have unforeseen consequences. Sometime after the governing council in Namarel, a remote village in Senegal, began broadcasting a weekly programme on Radio Gaynaako to let people know what it was doing and the problems it faced, it was surprised to discover that its tax revenue increased. As residents became aware of the council's accomplishments they were more willing to contribute. When the council realised what was happening, they in turn decided to use part of the increased revenue to support the radio station.

Community radio stations also make a very practical contribution to governance by, for example, informing the population of services available, advising them when they are not available, announcing changes in public office hours and so on. In a remote community merely announcing that a given government office will be closed next Tuesday can save people many hours and much expense. In the case of the travelling health clinic described in Box 7, the radio station helped provide a better service at a lower cost.

#### **Box 7: Community radio and health services**

Community radio can make very practical contributions to the efficient delivery of public services. Pilar Gutierrez of the Pucará Community Health Project in the south of Ecuador

reported that Radio Chaguarurco played an important role as a communication channel at the service of the communities, the telephone for those who don't have telephones, and made the local health budget stretch further at the same time.

*There are places where it is very difficult to access because they have no roads. The people who live there listen to the station for any information about visitors they might have so they can be ready for them... We have a medical team that periodically visits these communities. Before the radio station they would travel to a community and lose hours or even days waiting for the news of their arrival to get out to the people in the countryside and for the people to travel to where they were waiting to attend to their health problems. Now the radio station announces the visits and the community is ready and waiting for them on the announced day and time. This means the medical team can visit more communities and provide a more efficient and better service for everyone. (from Girard 2003, p. 233)*

A recent study on the social impact of community radio, concluded that the mere "existence of community radio is a measure of the level of democracy, good governance and accountability in a society" (AMARC 2007, p. 40). While the conclusion might appear to be overly simplistic, there is an undeniable correlation between government's tolerance of and support for community radio, and its willingness to be held accountable. Corrupt government officials are likely to be antagonistic toward community radio stations that expose them, but, as the five country studies report, community radio is supported by administrations that value democracy and transparency.

In Nepal, for example, the new government announced in its annual budget speech a plan to waive the licensing fee and cut royalty fees by 50% for one year in honour of the role played by community radio in establishing democracy. In its first year in power the same government issued 65 new community radio licenses, signalling not only its appreciation, but also its own commitment to being held publicly accountable.

Governments in other countries included in the study have also demonstrated their support for community radio and even encouraged its efforts to achieve greater transparency and participation. South Africa supports the broadcasting of the public meetings with authorities (*Imbizo*). Mali's government has tolerated intense criticism from its community radio stations while maintaining a standing equal to Australia, and France and well above the USA in the *Reporters Without Borders* Press Freedom Index. Colombia's national government supports community radio with policy and legislation that is widely regarded as the most supportive in Latin America, while local governments appreciate the opportunity to explain their policies and answer tough questions on the airwaves. Peru's government is perhaps the least enthusiastic among the countries studied, but even there authorities recognise the valuable role played by community radio in ensuring accountability and good governance.

*“Radio Cutivalú is definitively a social actor and has achieved some transformations. Together with the radio station, we have developed several campaigns, such as those for election transparency and for the right to access public information – access that should not be prevented by anyone; we have also developed some projects around tortures in the barracks, and citizens’ rights when confronting authorities.”*

*Dr. Eugenia Fernand Zegarra, regional ombudsperson for the province of Piura (Geerts et al 2004, p. 170)*

## Conclusions

Community radio has at least four roles with regards accountability and good governance:

1. An advocacy role in which it defends the interests of the population;
2. A role as a public forum for monitoring and discussion of issues related to accountability and governance;
3. A role as a partner of government seeking to inform and involve the community;
4. A role as a provider of services that result in a better delivery of public services in domains such as health and education.

While in some cases the role of community radio is seen as antagonistic to petty corruption and inefficiency, where there is an interest on the part of officials community radio can be a valuable partner helping to deliver services, enabling officials to explain their projects and problems, channeling community feedback, and identifying problems when they appear so they can be addressed.

## Role of Community Radio Associations & Networks

*What community radio associations and networks (especially nationally or sub-nationally) have been particularly successful in supporting development of community radio stations and the sector as a whole, and why?*

All five countries included in the study have one or more national or sub-national community radio associations or networks. These associations often play important roles in a number of areas:

- They represent the stations in negotiations with government and lobby on their behalf, especially on issues related to legislation, regulation, frequency allocation, licence renewal procedures, taxes, official advertising, and so on.
- They represent stations in negotiations with other bodies such as performing rights organisations and advertisers;
- They provide advice on licence application and renewal procedures;
- They provide or arrange for training and technical assistance for their member stations;
- They produce training materials (manuals, curricula) for use by members;
- They facilitate the exchange of news and programmes;



- They coordinate solidarity actions and campaigns to defend stations under pressure from political or financial interests because of their programming;
- They mobilise support for the stations from donor organisations;
- They provide spaces for debate, exchange of experience, cooperation among stations etc. by organising meetings, publishing newsletters, websites, etc.

Community radio associations and networks are not organised in the same way from one country to the next:

- In Colombia there are 23 regional groupings but no strong national association;
- In Peru the Coordinadora Nacional de Radio (CNR) has 49 radio stations and 27 production groups as members, but another 150 community stations are not members of any national association;
- The main community radio association in Mali has both community and commercial stations as members;
- South Africa's main community radio association is the National Community Radio Forum but there are a plethora of other networks and associations;
- Nepal has an association and a service agency that work closely together.

#### Peru's CNR: A decentralised network

Founded in 1978 the Coordinadora Nacional de Radio (CNR) is one of Latin America's oldest and most active community radio associations. CNR has 76 members comprised of 49 radio stations and 27 production centres.

Production centres are usually NGOs that produce radio programmes for broadcast on one or more radio stations. Some production centres are local groups that are unable to get their own radio station because, for example, they are in a large city where no frequencies are available. Others produce programmes for syndication to a number of stations. In both cases the programmes may be broadcast on community or commercial stations, but the NGOs share the democratic and participatory principles of community radio.

In 2003, following a long discussion, CNR adopted its current decentralised structure with four regions and two thematic networks. Each of the 4 regions has between 10 and 15 radio stations. The two thematic networks (*evangelisation and culture of peace* and *rural development and the environment*) cut across regions. The decision to decentralise was taken seriously and while the association's head office is in the capital city, members spread throughout the country manage fully 70 percent of CNR's budget.

CNR has three main areas of work: economic sustainability, capacity development and impact and public opinion.

In the area of **impact and public opinion** CNR operates a national network news service. In contrast to the rest of Peru's national news services, which focus on events in Lima, the CNR gives priority to events in the interior. In its decentralised model CNR member stations produce news and programmes that are then sent to Lima and packaged for national distribution. Twenty-two of the

49 member stations receive CNR's programming by satellite and most of the rest access it via the internet.

Programming includes two daily national newscasts, newscasts for the north, south and amazon regions, a national daily one-hour programme of analysis and interviews, a half hour national sports programme, a weekend news and analysis wrap-up programme, a weekly debate programme as well as in depth documentaries. Via the satellite, CNR members also receive programming from the Latin American satellite service ALER, which includes news and analysis from the continent and the world, music and culture and daily programmes in Quechua produced jointly by CNR and ALER.

In addition to reversing the traditional news flow from Lima to the provinces, CNR's programming seeks to promote a pluralistic debate on themes related to democracy and development and to ensure the issues of decentralisation, poverty, peace and the environment are present on the national public and political agendas.

In the area of **economic sustainability** CNR's main activities are in **advertising and production**. It sells ads on its own network programming and also operates the Agencia Intermediaria de Publicidad (intermediate advertising agency) that represents its members in the provinces to national advertisers based in Lima. CNR also produces radio for external clients from government, civil society and the private sector. Products include advertisements, radio drama, public service announcements, and documentaries.

Finally, in the area of **capacity development** CNR provides training for management, production, and technical staff of its members to contribute to both individual and institutional capacities.

CNR is a strong and vibrant network that provides practical services to its members. After almost thirty years it has proven to be both sustainable and flexible. However, while 49 stations is a respectable number of members, it remains to be explored why 75 percent of Peru's 200 community radio stations have not joined.

### Colombia's many networks

Networks are recognised as an essential part of the survival strategy of Colombia's community radio movement, but Colombia's networks have developed in a remarkably different way from Peru's.

Colombia has 23 regional community radio networks. At the national level there is SIPAZ (Sistema Nacional de Comunicación para la Paz – National Communication System for Peace) a network of grassroots organizations whose members include the regional networks but also television, print, internet and multimedia producers. SIPAZ also hosts AMARC Colombia's national representation to the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC).

A national community radio association, RECORRA, made an important contribution to the community radio legislation when it was being developed in the 1990s, however, without strong leadership RECORRA disappeared after only a few years.

There is no single model for Colombia's regional associations, and their capacity, activities, cohesion and participation vary from region to region. Colombia does not have a tradition of sustained community organisation initiatives, and it is common for organisations to form to deal with a specific problem and then fade away. In general the regional networks were formed very quickly and in a top-down fashion, more often in response to the government's need for partners to implement its initiatives than from the radio stations' needs. This approach goes a long way toward explaining why many of the regional networks never managed to consolidate their activities or to earn the support of the stations in their regions.

Nevertheless, a number of the regional networks are active and doing very important work. The network in Magdalena Medio, for example, is one of the oldest and best and it works closely with the networks in the neighbouring regions of Santander and North Santander. Together the three stand out for their achievements, whether measured by the number new and renewed licences in their regions, training courses, capable production teams, the quality of programmes or diversity of programme formats.

### Nepal: An evolving situation

When the Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalists (NEFEJ) set up Nepal's first community radio station, Radio Sagarmatha, it sparked interest in other communities. Municipalities, cooperatives and NGOs looked to the NEFEJ for guidance. To respond to the many request for assistance the NEFEJ set up the Community Radio Support Centre (CRSC) to provide practical support to the emerging community radio movement. CRSC's objectives are:

- To assist those interested in setting up community radio with technical and professional expertise as well as in securing funds for them.
- To strengthen networking among community radio stations, community radio promoters and independent community radio producers, and to facilitate exchange of radio programmes among them
- To assist communities to establish community radio in different geographical areas keeping in mind the linguistic, cultural, ethnic and social diversity.
- To strengthen capabilities of established community radio stations with professional and technical assistance.
- To organise periodic trainings for community radio producers and technicians.
- To identify appropriate places, from technical and resources points of view, for encouraging establishment of radio stations.
- To produce manuals and reference materials in community radio.
- To undertake community radio audience research/studies.
- To be active in lobbying and advocacy in order to mould public opinion in favour of making laws that are conducive to the growth and expansion of community radio.
- To establish and promote contacts with like-minded international organisations for world solidarity in favour of promotion of community radio broadcasting.

When it was first established CRSC also had advocacy and lobbying activities but as the community broadcasting sector grew the Association of Community radio Broadcasters in Nepal (ACORAB) was formed "as a common forum for enhancing the capacity of Community Radios to enable them to contribute

towards strengthening democracy, enhancing people's participation in the ongoing transitional processes and supporting community-led development initiatives."<sup>13</sup>

While CRSC seeks to provide concrete services to community radio stations, ACORAB's objectives are more concerned with advocacy, lobbying, and developing a common understanding of community radio as a participatory and democratic medium. Its objectives are:

- To protect and promote the professional rights and welfare of the community radio broadcasters by consolidating the movement of the community radios.
- To help develop democratic culture in media.
- To facilitate community broadcasters to exchange their experience.
- To make community radios more responsible to the society by defining the community radio movement.
- To work as the bridge between the government and the community radio broadcasters.
- To encourage its members to ensure maximum possible exercise of the people's right to information and freedom of expression as guaranteed in the constitution of Nepal.
- To expand its network/relation at the national and international level.

## AMARC

At the global level the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters, known by its French acronym AMARC, is an international non-governmental organisation serving the community radio movement, with almost 3,000 members and associates in 110 countries. From its international secretariat in Montréal, Canada and regional offices covering Africa, the Asia-Pacific region and Latin America and the Caribbean, AMARC supports and contributes to the development of community and participatory radio along the principals of solidarity and international cooperation.

AMARC has different ways of acting at the national level. In a few countries without a strong national association (Colombia, Uruguay, Mexico) AMARC has served as the rallying point and national AMARC chapters have been set up and in some countries with national associations AMARC actively provided national level technical support and solidarity (Nepal, South Africa). For most of the 110 countries in which it has members the Association is more valued for global and regional research initiatives, for example identifying good models of legislation, than for any direct national level intervention.

The Association's strategic plan for 2007-2010 includes a series of global activities as well as regional ones in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean. Activities are grouped into six major programme areas:

### **I. Advocacy and policy research**

- Advocacy for community media at the national, regional and international level

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.acorab.org/aboutus.html>

- Policy research, monitoring and knowledge exchange
- Solidarity activities including response to urgent calls from community radios threatened with closure or other interference and country solidarity missions.

## **II. Knowledge sharing and capacity building**

- Training of trainers, managers and producers
- Knowledge sharing and research
- Technical guidance and support

## **III. Content exchange and social action campaigns**

- Regional news and features services in Latin America, Africa and Asia
- Community media reporting from international fora and events
- Social action broadcast campaigns on HIV/AIDS, health, environment, migration, anti-racism, food security, water & sanitation;
- Interactive platform for programme exchange

## **IV. Gender equality and women's rights**

- Joint international broadcast campaigns
- Advocacy on media and gender
- Training and capacity building
- Networking and knowledge sharing

## **V. Network development and communication**

- Network communications and meetings
- Partnerships for development
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Dissemination of results
- Organisational development

## **VI. AMARC Regional and World Conferences of Community Radio Broadcasters**

- 10<sup>th</sup> world conference of community radio broadcasters (2010)
- Pan Africa conference
- 2nd regional conference in Asia Pacific (2009)
- Regional conference for Latin America and the Caribbean

AMARC is valued by community broadcasters in the five countries studied primarily because of its research and advocacy in support of creating enabling legislation and policy environments and because of its work supporting communication rights.

## **Conclusions**

A strong national network is critically important to the development and eventual sustainability of community radio. National networks:

- Represent member stations in negotiations with government and lobby on their behalf;
- Represent stations in negotiations with other bodies such as performing rights organisations and advertisers;

- Provide advice on licence application and renewal procedures;
- Provide or arrange for training and technical assistance for member stations;
- Produce training materials for use by members;
- Facilitate the exchange of news and programmes;
- Coordinate solidarity actions and campaigns to defend stations under pressure from political or financial interests because of their programming;
- Mobilise support for the stations from donor organisations;
- Provide spaces for debate, exchange of experience, cooperation among stations etc. by organising meetings, publishing newsletters, websites, etc.

Networks allow for the development of expertise to serve the movement (in legislation or licence renewal procedures, for example) and enable a more efficient use of resources (training curricula and materials produced centrally can be adapted for use at dozens of local stations). National or sub-national networks were instrumental to the development of community radio in each of the five countries studied.

## Sustainable Financing

*What have been the most useful and practical methods and mechanisms for community radio to become financially sustainable?*

*The survival and development experience of community media is like circus performers walking a tightrope in a delicate balance. They sometimes fall on the net and they climb back up to begin to walk again. The difference is that community media do not usually have a net to cushion the fall. (Gumucio 2004 – our translation)*

Despite the occasional fall, many community radio stations do survive their high-wire act by developing strategies to keep their costs down, by tapping a diversity of available funding sources and by opening up new sources of revenue. Nevertheless, few generalisations can be made about financing community radio. Keeping costs low is a common theme, but strategies for economising are very different for an isolated rural station with no paid staff and annual fixed costs of US\$2,000 or an urban station with an annual operating budget of US\$150,000 or more. The only generalisation that can be made is that financial sustainability is a universal concern among community radio stations, even the largest and most stable ones.

While there are examples of community radio stations with stable financial positions, these are the exceptions. In Mali, URTEL estimates that 90% of its members are unable to meet the basic operation costs of rent, electricity and personnel detailed in their budgets. Personnel is usually the first item to be cut, with station staff dividing what is left after paying the bills. Very few stations are prepared for the eventual breakdown of an important piece of equipment. A single bolt of lightning can mean the end of an apparently stable station with five or ten years of serving the community.

## How much does it cost to run a radio station?

The five country studies indicate a wide variation in the cost of running community radio stations. A tiny station in a rural area of Peru runs on US\$2,000 per year – basically the cost of rent and electricity, but another Peruvian station serving an entire region from an urban centre might have an annual budget of US\$150,000 or more – 75 times that of the small station. In Nepal, on the other hand, the difference between running a large station and a small one is only about US\$25,000 annually (see tables 3 and 4). Most of the US\$25,000 difference in the annual cost of running a 50 watt station and a 1,000 watt station accounted for by salaries (US\$11,000) and spectrum use fees (US\$9,000).

*Table 3: Monthly costs of a radio station with 50 watt transmitter in Nepal*

Item	Annual Cost (US\$)	Cost (%)
Salary	9,240	51%
Rent	1,476	8.2%
Electricity	1,380	7.6%
Phone/Fax	2,772	15.3%
Consumables (tapes, CDs, batteries etc)	1,476	8.2%
Maintenance	1,656	9.2%
Spectrum fees	96	0.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>18,096</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Table 4: Monthly costs of a radio station with 1000 watt transmitter in Nepal*

Item	Annual Cost (US\$)	Cost (%)
Salary	20,304	46.8%
Rent	1,848	4.3%
Electricity	4,620	10.6%
Phone/Fax	2,772	6.4%
Consumable (tapes, CDs, batteries etc)	1,848	4.3%
Maintenance	2,772	6.4%
Spectrum fees	9,228	21.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>43,392</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Local and national revenue

Community radio stations report a wide variety of local and national revenue sources. Advertising and sponsorship is the most common in all 5 countries, but stations also make money by selling airtime, providing coverage of special events, broadcasting messages from listeners, organising concerts and selling services.

### Advertising and sponsorship

While precise data is unavailable, it is clear that advertising and sponsorship are common sources of revenue in all five countries included in the study, although not all of the radio stations. It is noteworthy that in some countries not included in this study legislation has declared advertising off-limits to community radio, either because commercial broadcasters have mounted successful lobbies or because governments have mistakenly interpreted non-profit with no commercial activity.

In Nepal, the only country for which we have detailed national data, advertising and sponsorships account for 41% of the revenue of the 20 stations currently operating (see Table 5). The national data hides the fact that not all stations will have equal access to advertising as a revenue source. Radio stations in urban areas, with large coverage areas and serving relatively prosperous communities will be interesting to advertisers. Small stations in communities with few people and little commerce will have few commercial advertisers.

One problem that community radio stations outside of the main cities face is that even if their listenership has the characteristics that would interest advertisers, they have difficulty selling advertising because the advertisers and agencies are located in the main cities. In South Africa there are intermediate agencies that represent community radio stations to national advertisers and ad agencies. However, they take a minimum 35% commission, occasionally running as high as 65%. Across the sector and including both commercial and government advertising, the commission amounts to a multi-million dollar levy on the community radio sector.<sup>14</sup> Faced with a similar problem, Peru's CNR established its own intermediate agency in order to get a better deal for its members.

Table 5: Annual revenue of Nepal's 20 community radio stations

Item	Income (US\$)	Income (%)
Local advertisements & sponsorships etc	130,800	24%
National advertisements & sponsorships etc	89,200	17%
Local public service announcements	61,500	11%
National public service announcements	108,000	20%
Co-production and partnerships	118,500	22%
Other sources (Selling cards, cassettes & CDs, listener contributions, etc)	30,800	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>538,800</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### Public service announcements

Public service messages and campaigns covering a wide range of subjects are the second largest source of income for community radio stations in Nepal (31%) and the largest in Mali (75%). Clients are usually government and NGOs and the announcements are usually part of campaigns to raise awareness of health, social and economic issues. Community radio is recognised as a natural partner in these campaigns. In South Africa programming and public service announcements placed by the Government Communications Information System (GCIS) are a significant revenue source for community broadcasters.

For many radio stations public service announcements and campaigns are often a source of tension between the station and potential "clients". Clients who understand that public service is the *raison d'être* of the community radio station ask why they should pay for helping the station fulfil its mandate and many radio stations struggle with a dilemma; they hesitate to charge for airtime devoted to health or human rights messages or campaigns but they recognise that they have

<sup>14</sup> The Government Communication Information System alone places US\$2.5 million of advertising in radio annually, much of it with community radio stations.



to charge in order to keep the station on the air. The nature of a dilemma is that there are no easy answers to it, but clearly if the service provided by the station is what the client needs, then the client should be willing to pay for it, while station policies can also allow for *pro bono* services in the cases of clients who cannot afford to pay.

### **Community messages**

In remote areas community radio stations fulfil a role as a “community telephone” with up to several hours a day reserved for broadcasting personal messages, birth and death announcements, invitations to social functions, ordering food and supplies from the store in the next village, calling for emergency medical assistance and even for receiving personal medical advice from the local doctor. These messages may be intended to invite the entire community to a football game or they may be the only way to get a “private” message to an individual without a telephone. A small amount of money is charged per message, but for many stations they are a very important source of revenue. For example, Radio Marañon, a large regional station in a northern Peru, gets 30% of its budget from messages, the same amount it gets from advertising. For Chaski Radio, a much smaller station in an even more remote Peruvian community, messages account for 100% of its revenue.

### **Services**

Another way that community radio stations make money is by charging for various services that make use of their infrastructure and expertise. For example, they may produce advertisements, public service announcements, documentaries or educational programmes for government, NGOs or private sector clients. While this alternative is usually only available to radio stations in larger cities, where clients are likely to be located, the Coordinadora Nacional de Radio (CNR - Peru’s national community radio network) sometimes acts as a broker – selling the services of radio stations in the provinces to clients located in the capital city. In smaller towns radio stations often provide “disco” services – renting out a package that includes audio equipment, music and DJs to private and public parties and festivals.

### **Rental of airtime**

Many stations cover part of their costs by renting airtime to other organisations. In some cases the NGOs partners of the station pay a weekly sum as a contribution to keep the station on the air but in other cases it is a conscious commercial strategy. For example Peru’s La Voz de la Selva reserves 1.5 hours per day for renting to third parties. At the moment the Ministry of Education and a few NGOs rent airtime regularly and while the station does not interfere with editorial policy, their programmes tend to be compatible with station goals and “culture”.

### **Community contributions**

Mali has a long tradition of community organisations supported financially with voluntary contributions of communities so it is surprising that community radio stations there have not been able to tap into this source. Seventy-five percent of the sector’s revenue comes from public service announcements and an almost negligible amount from voluntary contributions from community members. No doubt there are numerous reasons for this but one of them is that the stations have done a poor job of marketing themselves as an essential service that merits community support.

Voluntary community contributions are not always in cash. In Peru and Colombia, for example, there is a long-standing tradition of *mingas*, when community members offer labour and materials for community projects. Many community radio stations have benefited from *mingas* to have their studios built or antennas raised.

### Public financing and support

Local and national governments have devised a variety of mechanisms for providing financial support to community radio. Unfortunately, at the local level data is scarce and it is not possible to know how many stations receive local government support. Nevertheless, all five countries in the study report that at least some stations receive local government support, although in general amounts are small and in-kind contributions are more common than financial ones. For example, the municipal government provides free electricity to Radio La Voz de Sepahua (Peru) in exchange for an hour of airtime per day for a municipal news program. There are also many examples of radio stations being housed in municipal buildings and of receiving some cash support.

In 2003 the author of this report conducted a study of all the community radio stations in Senegal and discovered that more than one half of them received cash or in-kind contributions from local authorities.

No cases were reported of local support being overtly used to ensure favourable coverage, but there are always moments when any important revenue source – government, private or civil society– can seek to influence editorial policy.

### National government support

In sharp contrast with the situation 10 or 15 years ago, when many governments were hostile to community radio, government programmes and other forms of support now provide reliable support to the sector in an increasing number of countries. The most common mechanisms for providing this support are through grants, reduced licence and/or spectrum use fees, and official advertising policies favourable to community radio.

In all five countries surveyed community radio is eligible for official advertising on a more or less equal footing with other media, reflecting good practice of allocating advertising budgets based on results. However, in many countries commercial broadcasters have argued that if community radio receives any government support, then it should not be eligible to carry official advertising. The idea that a government policy designed to support the sector should be neutralised by denying access to other funds is obviously without merit, but nevertheless has been successfully put forward by commercial broadcasters in some countries.

In practice the government of Mali uses all three mechanisms.

1. A media support programme provides US\$400,000 to the media, of which US\$150,000 is distributed by URTEL to community radio stations, an average of US\$1,239 per station. The eligibility criteria and support levels are determined by ministerial decree and stations do not all receive the same amount;
2. A 1992 presidential decree set a relatively low annual licence fee for community radio (CFA100,000 = approximately US\$200). URTEL argued successfully that the community radio stations could not afford

the fee and as a result the government has never insisted on payment and no community radio station has ever paid. This “debt relief” is another form of financial support;

3. Community radio stations are eligible to broadcast official government advertising, including public service announcements and this amounts to a relatively high proportion of the sector’s revenue.

South Africa has a number of mechanisms available, including the Media Development and Diversity Agency and the Government Communications Information System.

**The Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA)**<sup>15</sup> was set up as an independent agency by an Act of Parliament (Act 14 of 2002) to enable "historically disadvantaged communities and persons not adequately served by the media" to gain access to the media. It is funded by the South African Parliament and by foreign and national grants. Its beneficiaries are community and small commercial media. According to its website, to achieve its objective, the MDDA will:

- Encourage ownership and control of, and access to, media by historically disadvantaged communities, historically diminished indigenous language and cultural groups;
- Encourage the channelling of resources to community and small commercial media;
- Encourage human resource development and capacity building in the media industry, especially amongst historically disadvantaged groups;
- Encourage research regarding media development and diversity.

The MDDA allocates US\$ 760,000 per year, 60% of its funding, to community radio initiatives. Its support can include core running costs for a limited period, funds for training, seed funding for new projects, and one off projects including audience research, feasibility studies, development of business plans and equipment acquisition.

The **Government Communications Information System (GCIS)** is located in the presidency and is the body primarily responsible for communication between government and the people, with a particular interest in development communication that emphasises direct dialogue, especially with people in disadvantaged areas. About US\$2.5 of the GCIS’ advertising budget US\$8.5 million is spent on radio with community radio receiving a “reasonable” share. Part of this funding is used to pay community radio stations to cover *Imbizos*; the public forums that take place when the President visits a community and people raise issues and questions.

In Colombia support is primarily provided by the Ministry of Communication through its Access and Social Development Division and the Community Radio Office in the Ministry of Culture. Neither of these offers much direct financial support, preferring to provide training and technical assistance. Stations do get some reprieve from Colombia’s multi-tiered spectrum fees. Community radio stations pay an average of US\$620 per year, much lower than the fee charged to commercial broadcasters. Colombia is also one of the few countries in the world

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.mdda.org.za/>

in which community radio projects are eligible to access the universal access funds normally reserved for telecommunications.

Neither Peru nor Nepal has specific government programmes to support community radio, although in both countries community radio stations receive considerable revenue from government advertising. In Nepal the government formed after the of the uprising announced a plan to waive most spectrum fees for one year in honour of the role played by community radios in establishing democracy in April 2006.

## Conclusions

Financial sustainability is one of the principal challenges faced by community radio and most stations are in a permanently precarious financial state.

Key sources of revenue include advertising, public service announcements and rental of time on air, but many stations have identified innovative ways of supplementing their income, for example by selling audio production services.

Government advertising and public service announcements are an important source of revenue for the community radio sector in all five countries included in the study. It is good policy for stations to charge for these announcements and campaigns and for institutions that desire to place them on the airwaves to be willing to pay.

Community radio stations, especially in rural areas, provide an important social infrastructure. This has been formally recognised at the national level in three of the five countries included in the study (Colombia, Mali and South Africa), all of which have specific national programmes to provide public funds to support community radio. Many stations also receive financial support from local or regional government.

## Community Radio in Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations

*What roles have community radio stations played in preventing and resolving conflict, and supporting post-conflict reconciliation and reconstruction?*

Each of the five countries in the study has a different experience with conflict.

- Colombia has experienced varying intensities of armed conflict almost continuously for the past 40 years. There have been hundreds of thousands of deaths, millions of internal refugees, and large expanses of territory are under insurgent control;
- The violent insurgency in Peru that took 70,000 lives in the 1980s and 90s was largely ended by 2000, the beginning of a process of truth and reconciliation;
- Nepal's armed insurgency that began in 1996 and claimed 15,000 lives in ten years was followed in 2006 by a successful mass uprising against the King after he dismissed the government and assumed full control.
- With the end of apartheid in 1994 South Africa's low-intensity conflict also came to an end. Nevertheless, political and cultural conflict are still present;

- In Mali community and inter-community conflicts are common, often having to do with disagreements about use of resources such as water and pastures.

We can find at least three ways that community radio stations deal with these different levels and types of conflict:

- Promoting human rights and a culture of peace; (Colombia, Nepal, Peru)
- Helping to resolve conflicts; (Mali, Nepal)
- Helping communities cope with conflict. (Colombia, Nepal)

### Human rights and culture of peace

Earlier in this text, in the section on exertion of rights, we looked at a number of examples of how community radio raises awareness of human rights, noting that the greatest impediment to ensuring respect for human rights is the low level of awareness of them. In the same vein, the best way of avoiding conflict is to ensure that there are working alternatives to conflict that people are aware of. Merely by providing a space for dialogue community radio can help prevent conflict, but, as we have seen, community radio goes beyond being a forum and actively seeks to raise awareness of and respect for human rights. Examples include Nepal's educational programmes about constitutional rights, the Geneva Convention, and international treaties and covenants ratified by the Nepalese government, but they also include promoting a more general awareness of a culture of peace and of human rights in the way that many of Peru's stations did during and after the truth and reconciliation process that followed the war, and the way Mali's network promotes awareness and discussion of rights in the context of judicial reform.

#### **Box 8: Radio building peace**

Search for Common Ground published *Youth Radio for Peacebuilding*, a guide "for broadcasters (adults and youth) who want to make good, entertaining youth radio programmes which also build peace".

"Conflict is a widespread phenomenon, and there are many different types (political, social, economic, religious etc.) all of which may or may not result in violence. They can also be categorised according to the groups or individuals involved (generations, castes, ethnicities, nationalities, etc.). Equally, some specialists describe conflicts according to different phases, distinguishing, for example, 'pre-conflict', 'confrontation', 'crisis', 'resolution' and 'post-conflict'.

"These categories can be useful because they allow us to analyse a situation, but we mustn't forget that conflicts evolve; conflicts aren't static, they transform and even superimpose themselves one on top of another, altering over time and depending on events.

"Conflicts are often caused by more than one of these factors. Indeed it is important for broadcasters to remember and to recognise that conflicts are usually the result of a combination of impulses, desires, needs, beliefs and perceptions. In violent conflicts there are often multiple perceptions of causes; they are almost never simple tugs-of-war between two groups. Most violent conflicts result from a whole collection of sometimes widely differing and even incompatible views, ideas, ideals and perceptions.

"Conflicts can also result from the clash of beliefs with facts. Female circumcision or female genital mutilation is one such example – even the different ways of describing the practice demonstrate that it is a conflict issue. In this case the clash is between cultural traditions (values), and the physical consequences of the practice (facts). Presenting practitioners with the facts of its physical impact has

convinced many that the practice needs to be changed, and/or eradicated.

“Most lasting changes in a society are brought about by questioning and debate on the merits of the changes. In short, this disagreement or conflict is an integral part of everyone’s lives. If conflict is well managed the parties will develop a common approach about the speed and dimension of the changes they want. If it’s badly managed, then the conflict will probably become violent.”

## Conflict resolution

When we speak of conflicts we immediately think of major events, international conflicts, civil wars, massacres, electoral violence, and so on. But there are also “smaller” conflicts such as rivalries between villages or neighbourhoods and disputes over land use. While a community radio station is likely to have only a very limited role in resolving a major armed insurgency, it can play a very effective role in resolving conflict at the local level.

In his book *Youth Radio for Peacebuilding* Michael Shipler (2006) reminds us that conflict is a normal and widespread phenomenon and, if managed properly, it can help bring about lasting and positive change. Many of the reasons for conflict escalation can be addressed by communication. These include:

- When there is little or no communication between two or more sides who disagree
- When false ideas and beliefs about each other held by the different sides
- When there are historical, long-time grievances between the different sides

Shipler observes that there are many examples in which radio can help manage conflict by, for example, emphasising dialogue and encouraging mutual understanding between ethnic, religious, linguistic or other groups. As examples of positive roles which radio programming can take on, the author lists:

- It can be a form of communication between protagonists
- It can correct misperceptions by inviting guests and experts to explain themselves clearly
- It can make one side more human to the other
- It can personalize an ideology or a myth, by giving them names and voices and airing real stories

### **Box 9: Conflict resolution: Two examples from Mali**

The *Voice of Folona* in the Sikasso region, on the border with Ivory Coast, helped avoid inter-community confrontations during the first weeks of the Ivory Coast’s crisis in 2002. Thousands of refugees and displaced persons fleeing the rebellion set up camp on the Malian side of the border. There was a sudden enormous pressure on the communities in Mali, with shortages of supplies and consequent price increases. The radio station quickly got involved by broadcasting messages of tolerance, with the help of local chiefs. The messages reminded listeners of African traditions regarding hospitality and welcoming strangers. The messages succeeded in reducing tension and avoiding a potentially violent situation.

In the village of Niano in Mali local merchants cheated the farmers. Angered by this, the farmers decided not to repay money they had borrowed from the bank, and the bank in turn refused to make loans available for the next season. To help resolve the conflict, *Radio Ceseri* organised a series of one-hour on-air discussions with the villagers. During the second programme an agreement was reached between the farmers and the bank.

- It can give protagonists and listeners an emotional outlet, or a new way to see the problem, or an opportunity to hear about solutions and/or positive changes achieved elsewhere.

### Coping with conflict

When a conflict reaches the level of a civil war, the ability of a community radio station to resolve it is limited. It may be able to educate about human rights or to try to resolve misunderstandings and prejudices, but even these are difficult to in a war zone when the combatants on both sides have an interest in maintaining prejudices and a culture of fear. However, while community radio is unlikely to bring the two sides to the table, there are many cases of it helping communities cope.

In Colombia, for example, radio stations in the eastern part of the Department of Antioquia, one of the most violent regions of the country, have a daily networked programme for hostages being held by the insurgents. The stations tell the story of a man who was released and the first thing he did was go to one of the stations to embrace the presenters to tell them that he had been able to put up with 4 years of captivity only because in the morning he could listen to the station and hear the voices of family members and others encouraging him.

Another Colombian case is recounted by Rodríguez and González (1996) about a Saturday night in Belén de Andaquíes. Most of the town's youth were having a celebration in the plaza when a battle broke out between the guerrilla and the police. It was a typical war scene – armed occupation, aerial bombardment, shooting... When there is a battle nearby radio stations often go off the air in order avoid becoming a target, but in this case the station stayed on the air, letting people know what was going on and guiding the young people from the plaza to safe zones until the fighting was over.

### Conclusions

There are at least three ways that community radio stations deal with different levels and types of conflict:

- They promote human rights and a culture of peace;
- They help resolve conflicts;
- They helping communities cope with conflict.

In the first of these the radio station's role is largely educational and awareness raising.

In terms of conflict resolution:

- Community radio can be a form of communication between protagonists
- Community radio can correct misperceptions by inviting guests and experts to explain themselves clearly
- Community radio can make one side more human to the other
- Community radio can personalize an ideology or a myth, by giving them names and voices and airing real stories
- Community radio can give protagonists and listeners an emotional outlet, or a new way to see the problem, or an opportunity to hear about solutions and/or positive changes achieved elsewhere.

Finally, radio can help people deal with conflict by them informed, for example by telling them what areas to avoid during an armed confrontation.



## CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

### Participatory Processes and Volunteers

Without volunteers' time, knowledge and experience community radio would not exist. Volunteers are the community's presence inside the radio station and an important mechanism for enabling the meaningful community participation in programming, operating and financing that is the essence of community radio.

There are two main types of volunteers –direct and partnership– and they must be managed differently. Both types can help make a station financially possible, contribute to its diversity. Partnership volunteers provide stations with a high level of expertise in its programming and they come with the backing of an outside institution. While there is a large body of knowledge and experience worldwide about volunteer management, in general it appears that community radio has failed to make adequate use of it. The cases studied indicate that there is little understanding of motivations and incentives and in only in a very few cases is there evidence of written agreements setting out rights and responsibilities of volunteers or of written job descriptions for volunteers.

Among the good practices identified in the national reports are:

- Systematic recruitment procedures that help ensure that a station attracts volunteers with profile that fit its needs;
- Basic training provided as part of a “buddy system”
- Basic training that includes both hands on learning and theoretical study;
- Basic training that is accompanied with orientation to the general concepts and values of community radio and of the individual station;
- When advanced training is available from external suppliers it can be used to develop skills but also provides an incentive for volunteers;
- Nationally produced training materials that can be readily adapted by local stations.

### Relationship with the Community

- Community participation in programming is highly valued by community radio stations.
- Community radio stations in all five countries use innovative participatory formats.
- Community participation is not restricted to programming. There are many examples of community participation in stations' decision-making structures. In Colombia stations are legally required to have community members on their Boards and Programming Councils and many of them do. However, even in the other countries where there is no legal requirement, most community stations have adopted structures that include elected decision-making bodies and broad community participation in non-programming aspects of a station's operation.
- As important as the legal status of the body that “owns” the station are its governance and membership structures, which can either restrict meaningful participation to a small group or open it up to the whole community.

- Communities that provide support for community stations can insist that the station be responsive to listener concerns through mechanisms such as the annual general meetings and independent elected boards of directors.
- Good enabling legislation and regulation are necessary but insufficient for ensuring community control of community radio.
- Community radio can help a community organise itself, but if the community does not have a certain level of organisation and interest, the station can be taken over to serve the narrow interests of organised individuals or groups.

## Exertion of Rights

Participatory media and communication of the kind afforded by community radio is one of the most powerful ways of ensuring that people are aware of their rights and able to exert, defend and extend them. The country studies highlighted three overlapping strategies employed by community radio stations: **educating** about rights, **monitoring** the status of rights, and **advocating** for recognition and extension of rights.

When it comes to advocating for rights, community radio can provide social and communication infrastructure for even the most disempowered of groups. This accelerates their efforts to achieve social justice.

The most effective campaigns are not undertaken by community radio stations, but arise organically from within the community. Nevertheless, by providing a forum for discussion community radio stations play an important catalysing role, helping communities to better articulate their concerns and propose solutions and common actions.

## Accountability and Good Governance

Community radio has at least four roles with regards accountability and good governance:

5. An advocacy role in which it defends the interests of the population;
6. A role as a public forum for monitoring and discussion of issues related to accountability and governance;
7. A role as a partner of government seeking to inform and involve the community;
8. A role as a provider of services that result in a better delivery of public services in domains such as health and education.

While in some cases the role of community radio is seen as antagonistic to petty corruption and inefficiency, where there is an interest on the part of officials community radio can be a valuable partner helping to deliver services, enabling officials to explain their projects and problems, channeling community feedback, and identifying problems when they appear so they can be addressed.

## Role of Community Radio Associations and Networks

A strong national network is critically important to the development and eventual sustainability of community radio. National networks:

- Represent member stations in negotiations with government and lobby on their behalf;
- Represent stations in negotiations with other bodies such as performing rights organisations and advertisers;
- Provide advice on licence application and renewal procedures;
- Provide or arrange for training and technical assistance for member stations;
- Produce training materials for use by members;
- Facilitate the exchange of news and programmes;
- Coordinate solidarity actions and campaigns to defend stations under pressure from political or financial interests because of their programming;
- Mobilise support for the stations from donor organisations;
- Provide spaces for debate, exchange of experience, cooperation among stations etc. by organising meetings, publishing newsletters, websites, etc.

Networks allow for the development of expertise to serve the movement (in legislation or licence renewal procedures, for example) and enable a more efficient use of resources (training curricula and materials produced centrally can be adapted for use at dozens of local stations). National or sub-national networks were instrumental to the development of community radio in each of the five countries studied.

## **Sustainable Financing**

Financial sustainability is one of the principal challenges faced by community radio and most stations are in a permanently precarious financial state.

Key sources of revenue include advertising, public service announcements and rental of time on air, but many stations have identified innovative ways of supplementing their income, for example by selling audio production services.

Government advertising and public service announcements are an important source of revenue for the community radio sector in all five countries included in the study. It is good policy for stations to charge for these announcements and campaigns and for institutions that desire to place them on the airwaves to be willing to pay.

Community radio stations, especially in rural areas, provide an important social infrastructure. This has been formally recognised at the national level in three of the five countries included in the study (Colombia, Mali and South Africa), all of which have specific national programmes to provide public funds to support community radio. Many stations also receive financial support from local or regional government.

## **Community Radio in Conflict & Post-Conflict Situations**

There are at least three ways that community radio stations deal with different levels and types of conflict:

- They promote human rights and a culture of peace;
- They help resolve conflicts;

- They helping communities cope with conflict.

In the first of these the radio station's role is largely educational and awareness raising.

In terms of conflict resolution:

- Community radio can be a form of communication between protagonists
- Community radio can correct misperceptions by inviting guests and experts to explain themselves clearly
- Community radio can make one side more human to the other
- Community radio can personalize an ideology or a myth, by giving them names and voices and airing real stories
- Community radio can give protagonists and listeners an emotional outlet, or a new way to see the problem, or an opportunity to hear about solutions and/or positive changes achieved elsewhere.

Finally, radio can help people deal with conflict by them informed, for example by telling them what areas to avoid during an armed confrontation.

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## **ANNEXES**

Terms of Reference

Colombia Report

Mali Report

Nepal Report

Peru Report

South Africa report

## Terms of Reference

# Good Practices in Development and Operation of Community Radio Issues Important to its Effectiveness

**Countries: Colombia, Peru, South Africa, Mali, Nepal**

### Background

Across many countries and in different regions, community radio stations have been fostering community participation and creating an appetite for transparent and accountable governance, even in challenging regulatory environments. Participation and governance depends on common people, particularly poor communities, collectively articulating their concerns and shaping the topics that are to be discussed and on which government action is scrutinized, promoted, and monitored.

Community radio (CR) stations are owned and operated by the communities they serve. They are non-profit, non-partisan, and usually non-sectarian, and operate in a participatory way, relying on volunteers for reporters, producers and newscasters. Through community radio, poor constituencies can develop their own news programs and present discussions on matters affecting their community. They share information in a language they understand. They can debate issues, produce weekly programs, and develop talkback radio programs by phone or mail drop. In the process, poor constituencies who were isolated and marginalized are becoming energized, developing informed opinions, and becoming more adept at using information to protect themselves, to make informed decisions and to get results.

In most of the countries in which we work, one important focus is to support interested communities to establish community radio stations, and develop their capacities in programming, credible local reporting, station management and resource mobilization. We are doing this as a preliminary phase, before developing larger support programs for the community radio sector. In particular, this phase clarifies how best to support the participatory planning and establishment of community radio, how to enhance their capacities, and the likelihood of their sustainability. There is also a pressing need to learn good practices in the development, operations and maintenance of these community radio stations, particularly on issues important to their effectiveness. Likewise, there is a need to learn the risks involved and how to mitigate them. The findings can help us better plan for a larger, more comprehensive support program for the community radio sector.

### The Study

This proposed study will be carried out as seven country studies with local consultants handling one study each. It is expected that this research should begin with extraction from existing, available information, and then fill in the gaps, using interviews and group meetings, to provide reliable nation-wide information answering questions posed below. The final synthesis report will be prepared by a coordinator/editor, who will coordinate with the local consultants, and who will distill, integrate, analyze and clearly present the key findings.

All the studies should be organized to address the following topics, providing descriptions and analyses of country/case examples. The specific context of the country will naturally mean that certain topics will yield more useful information than others. The sections are intended to illuminate good practices in community radio development and operation – showcasing instructive examples, and how and why they worked. The key question to be answered in the final synthesis report is in bold italics, and is followed by examples of particular issues to pursue.

Each national study should be accompanied by a brief introduction to the country context focusing on critical factors that determine the nature and utility of community radio in the country.

- **Participatory Processes and Volunteerism.** *What are the best cases of participatory processes in community radio that lead to active and sustained volunteerism from the communities, what levels and types of volunteerism result, and how is this sustained?* What kind of participatory practices yield a sense of ownership, commitment, and a high level of sustained volunteerism? How are volunteers recruited, trained and supported? What motivates

them? What is the range of roles played by volunteers (support, management, reporters, correspondents, content expertise, etc.) and what motivates them? What tends to be the ratio of staff to volunteers per station (e.g., on average, is it 5:30 indicating heavy reliance on volunteers, or 12:3, indicating heavy reliance on full-time, paid staff?). Are there practices that specifically encourage the effective and meaningful participation of women, youth and minorities? How do CRs deal with high turnover and are there any incentives in place?

- **Relationship with the Community.** *How have community radio stations ensured that they are the voice of the community?* How do communities and community organizations participate in the community radio stations? Are they involved in programming, if so, how specifically? What is the process used to develop and deliver programming that gives a voice to the community and enables it to set the agenda for discussion and action? What program formats ensure that the issues of concern to the community, and their perspectives, are heard? How is the community involved in operations and management, financing, evaluation and ownership? Does the community own the radio station and what is their relationship with local authorities, organizations and business interests? What community monitoring and feedback mechanisms are used? Do stations undertake audience surveys or hold public meetings to gauge community support for the programming or to facilitate community participation in developing programming?
- **Exertion of Rights.** *How has community radio helped people and communities press successfully for their civil and human rights, advocate successfully with officials, protect themselves from abuse, and become legally and socially empowered?* Where are there good examples of CR contributing to public education, awareness-building and problem-solving on legal rights, including women's rights and the ability of poor, marginalized people to protect themselves, organize and press for respect of their rights? What groups have become aware and pressed for their rights? How is the programming delivered? What is the interaction with listeners? What complementary support (coaching, community organizing and advising) has been important, for example to help marginalized groups to develop tactical skills? What alliances have been built between CR and organizations that focus on legal, civil, and human rights – and what practical collaborative programs have they carried out? Have community radio stations and networks collaborated with members of parliament or others to raise issues at the national level? What are the key enablers and impediments?
- **Accountability and Good Governance.** *What are good examples of community radio programs being used to press successfully for better delivery of public services or investments, and for more government transparency and accountability. Why and how have they been successful? What types of governance issues arise in CR broadcasts? How they arise? Are there examples of “talk back” programs? If so, how did they they developed and how do they work? What are the impacts? Are there examples of broadcasting government meetings (e.g. broadcasting from the district assembly floor)? Of community discussion and feedback on government proposals? Of exposing corruption? What's been important, to develop these uses of CR? What has been the reaction of government and local authorities? Are there any examples of governments welcoming the chance to “set the record straight” or local officials actively and opening answering concerns and redressing problems on the air? What has not worked, in developing and delivering these programs, and why?*
- **Role of CR Networks.** *What CR associations and networks (especially nationally or subnationally) have been particularly successful in supporting development of CR stations and the sector as a whole, and why. How are community radio networks structured? What are their main strengths and weaknesses?* What networks exist? What are their main objectives and what services do they provide (management, capacity-building, advocacy, programming, network-facilitating, technical support, identifying needs, mobilizing resources ...) Have their objectives and services evolved over time? Describe how they were established; how they are organized and managed; and how they operate. Have their objectives and services evolved over time? Where there are multiple networks within a country, what have been the problems or advantages? What role have ICTs played in the networks? Have regional and global associations or networks been helpful in practical terms. How? If there is more than one, Provide a simple matrix of each network or association, the topics they have addressed and services and other assistance they have provided, with notation of examples and relevant years.



- **Sustainable Financing.** *What have been the most useful and practical methods and mechanisms for CR to become financially sustainable?* How has CR successfully mobilized local funding on a sustained basis, and what public financing schemes are or have been available?
  - What strategies and successful methods of *CR stations mobilizing local revenues* are being used? What does experience tell us is realistic regarding the proportion of a CR's operating expenses that can be financed from local resource mobilization? What are the differences in this experience between rural and urban areas? What features of the country context and culture have a strong influence on CRs' ability to raise revenue from their local communities and other local stakeholders? Are there examples of CRs being compensated by government agencies or NGOs making use of air time for their substantive programming? Are there examples of local government agencies or others providing in-kind support such as office and studio space, use of vehicles or other supplies or equipment? Has this been done without compromising CR's independence?
  - What are good examples of *public finance mechanisms for CR* and what has made these systems viable in the country context? What tax or levy mechanisms have been used successfully to fund community broadcasting and why have these systems worked? How have other public policies, such as allowing or restricting advertising revenue, impacted on CR finances?
  
- **Role of CRs in Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations.** What roles have CR stations played in preventing and resolving conflict, and supporting post-conflict reconciliation and reconstruction? How have conflict prevention and reconciliation radio programs been developed and sustained, etc. and what has made them successful? Are there any risks involved, and if so, how have they been mitigated? (Such risks might include political pressure, threats against station personnel, becoming mouthpieces for interest groups, and so on.)