

COMMUNITY MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY GUIDE

The Business of Changing Lives

An Internews publication written and edited by Jean Fairbairn



“Innovative program production can go straight to the station’s bottom line — every time a new audience is created, there are new opportunities for funding and sponsorship.”

— **PROFESSOR JOHN VAN ZYL,**
MEDIA EDUCATOR, SOUTH AFRICA

About Internews

Internews Network is an international media development organization whose mission is to empower local media worldwide to give people the news and information they need, the ability to connect, and the means to make their voices heard. Founded in 1982, the organization has worked in over 70 countries and trained over 70,000 media professionals worldwide.

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COVER PHOTO: Radio listenership has increased in Afghanistan since 2001. Picture by BARAT ALI BATOOR. Source: Internews Afghanistan.

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We especially thank our Advisory Committee for advice that helped shape the guide and who also wrote sections of the guide. We also thank other writers and other contributors, who are credited in the text.

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Most of all, thanks to the many people we interviewed for their time, their honesty, and their courage in discussing what are sometimes difficult issues.

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Introduction

Some years ago the notion of a business model for community media would have brought responses ranging from dismay to ridicule. Community media's origins in political struggle, its community ownership structures, its participatory production processes, and its whole purpose—to give voice to the voiceless, to provide an alternative to mainstream media, to place control of media in the hands of ordinary people—seem fundamentally to contradict the notions of both “business” and “model.”

Today community media are becoming a valued and recognized part of the media landscape. International aid agencies, concerned about meeting the Millennium Development Goals, are showing ever greater interest in community media's ability to inform and empower. More and more governments are acknowledging the contribution of community media to local government communications and service delivery, to education, to health and economic development, and are introducing positive legal frameworks for community media. In this new era of recognition, community media are increasingly seen as small enterprises with *a responsibility* to survive and provide high-quality services.

New technologies—particularly the Internet—are also profoundly affecting the community media environment. The shift to digital communications has brought about an explosion of new media opportunities, activities and forms. Convergence—the mixing of “old” media and “new” technologies—means mobile phones can be used as radio receivers and cameras; computers can be used to watch television programs; radio



The view from Kibongo, capital of Rwanda's Eastern Province. In Section 2, we include a study of Radio Izuba, a community radio station that broadcasts from Kibongo to a largely rural audience.

stations with Internet connections can act as post offices, sending and receiving emails on behalf of their listeners.

At the same time, new technologies have brought greater competition for scarce resources. Advertising—at the core of most media business models—is now flooding to the Internet and all media are seeking new ways of making money. Community media are engaging in activities like training, running farms, conducting research, managing Internet centers, operating telephone services—activities that go far beyond their primary role as producers and distributors of information, education and entertainment.

The Community Media Sustainability Guide explores some of the challenges and issues facing community media as they struggle to survive in the twenty-first century. It is designed to be of value to community media practitioners and to donors, trainers, consultants, and others who provide support to community media in a changing environment. We draw on research and experiences

of community media from all over the world to provide different perspectives on sustainability and approaches to achieving it.

We focus on financial sustainability. This is not because we believe that success with funding and finance automatically results in sustainable community media, but because funding and finance are a major concern.

Our spotlight falls mainly on community media serving communities in developing countries, whose fortunes are so often tied to international donor support. This in turn means a bias towards community radio because of its wide use in the developing world. However, a focus on radio does not exclude other forms of community media—newspapers, community media centers, online media, film, and video. Community media of all kinds share principles and practices.

How do you become financially sustainable? Unfortunately, there is no simple answer. Every situation and organization

is different. There is no one business model or formula, no one-size-fits all solution, no secret recipe—only a variety of models and experiences, good and bad, to learn from.

So we cannot tell you how to achieve financial sustainability, but we can discuss the issues and share ideas, models, and approaches. Throughout the guide we include examples of community media. We do this to illustrate some of our arguments, to demonstrate the struggles community media must face daily in order to survive, and above all to show the extraordinary creativity of the communities who build and sustain community media.

The guide

As a loose framework for the guide, we have used what we believe are the internal and external factors that are necessary for community media to achieve financial sustainability: clear definitions; approaches to sustainability and business models that take account of the dynamic nature of communities; the centrality of mission; the importance of an enabling legal environment; audience research capacity and the networks and associations to advocate for community media, share content and set standards. We ad-

dress these topics in the first section. We do not deal with each comprehensively; however, we touch on all of them.

In the second section, we include detailed studies of community media, chosen from a pool of examples put forward by the advisory committee and other contributors to the guide. In making the final selection, our intention was to cover different contexts, countries and kinds of media. Most of all, the studies aim to highlight the challenges community media face as they struggle to become sustainable.

Community media has become something of a growth industry, and new books, articles, research papers, evaluation and other reports are appearing all the time. Finally, we include a list of resources. Inevitably, our list cannot be comprehensive, but we believe it is a solid start for those wanting to explore further.

We hope the guide will be of value to the thousands of community media activists and practitioners engaged in the daily struggle to build sustainable community media and to the many donors and development agencies that support them.

When we talk about sustainability, what is it that we want to sustain?

In simple terms, sustainability means to keep going over a period of time, and many community media do keep going for long periods of time, providing valued services. But the majority live a hand-to-mouth existence, with no cash reserves to cushion them against crises or unexpected expenses. There are examples of community media institutions that generate steady streams of income, but these are mostly in developing countries—and they are exceptions.

Most community media serve poor and marginalized communities and have at one time or another received grant support. Donors are especially concerned that the projects they fund should become sustainable. Apart from the loss of community benefit, donors' reputations are at stake if projects fail. The managers, staff and volunteers of projects are equally concerned about sustainability—their livelihoods may depend on it. In communities without access to other forms of media, community media play life-saving roles. [Radio Vwa Peyizan Abriko](#) in Haiti, for example, was set up primarily to broadcast storm warnings, because when storms arrived unannounced, communities were unprepared and people were killed.

These issues make the financial sustainability of community media a universal concern. In this section, we discuss community media's core principles and different approaches to sustainability.

COMMUNITY MEDIA: CORE PRINCIPLES AND DEFINITIONS

Community media is now widely recognized by governments and the international development community both for its reach and for its practices, that is, the ways in which it reaches people. Recognition has led more and more governments (sometimes reluctantly, under pressure to democratize) to introduce laws and regulations that include community media. What this means is that community media organizations are increasingly being shaped and defined within mainstream systems, as a “third” tier of media, in relation to the “first” and “second” tiers of commercial and public media.

This is a shift from the past, when community media developed in opposition to the mainstream, to represent and give voice to oppressed, marginalized, and excluded communities. One of the defining features of community media was its origins in people's struggles against oppressive regimes, poverty, and exploitation, and there are many examples of community media that have been shut down by repressive governments. The new era of recognition and value owes a huge debt to decades of work by community media pioneers and activists, whose thinking and contributions are reflected in the new policies and laws now being drafted.

From struggle to mainstream: community radio in South Africa

The birth of community radio in South Africa is a classic example of community radio being born in struggle and later becoming a part of the mainstream.

South Africa's community radio sector started small, in the 1980s, pioneered by a tiny resistance organization known as CASET (the Cassette Education Trust). CASET interviewed leaders and activists of the anti-apartheid struggle and recorded speeches and debates on cassette tapes. Activists distributed the tapes at meetings and rallies so that opponents of apartheid could hear resistance news and viewpoints and the voices of their leaders, who were then barred by state radio and the white-owned mainstream press.¹

Despite repression, arrests, and bannings, resistance media persisted under apartheid. CASET caught the imagination of student organizations, and a community radio movement took root. The movement learnt from international organizations like AMARC, said Edric Gorfinkel, founder of CASET and pioneer of community radio in South Africa:²

We had a lot of debate about the [term] community radio and what we wanted to call it and quite honestly at the time we thought we were inventing the [term]. We thought we'd invented the concept of community radio! It was only when AMARC got hold of our stuff somehow or other, and we got this thing inviting us to send something to the World Assembly of Community Radio. And we thought whoa, hey, man—there's other people out there doing it.²

The new movement incorporated lessons learned in the international arena into proposals for a post-apartheid radio system. The first law defining community radio was passed in 1993—and in 1995, after liberation and amid great joy and celebration, the first community radio stations went on air.

The law states that a community radio station must have the following properties:

- Fully controlled by a nonprofit body and run for nonprofit purposes
- Serves a particular community
- Encourages community participation in selecting and running programs
- May be funded by donations, grants, sponsorships, advertising, or membership fees, or by a combination of these methods⁴

To be granted a license, the station must meet all four criteria. South Africa's legal definition sees the radio frequency spectrum as a public resource. Community radio licenses represent frequencies and are held by community representatives acting on behalf of the larger community. Ownership of the license is open to challenge, and to keep the license, the community's representatives must ensure that programming consistently serves community needs and interests.

More than 100 stations have been licensed in South Africa, serving a variety of geographic communities and ethnic, cultural, and religious groups. Community radio is today an accepted part of the media landscape, and stations compete with commercial and public radio for listeners and advertisers. According to figures published in 2008 by the South African Advertising Research Bureau, 22.6% of all South Africans over age 18 listen to community radio.⁵ This is an impressive statistic and marks steady growth from 10%–11% of the same group since the launch of the sector in 1995.

Core principles within many definitions

Community media are dynamic entities. Some people see them as *processes*, or communities using technology to take control of their own development. Others see them as more as communications tools, or institutions organized around information and communications technologies.

The World Association of Community Broadcasters (AMARC) gives the task of defining community radio over to its members, and lists on its website several answers to the question, “What is community radio?”⁶ There are also many definitions in the growing number of charters, statements, and manuals that are emerging. However, in general, there is agreement on four principles that are seen as pillars of community broadcasting:

- Community ownership and control
- Community service
- Community participation
- A nonprofit business model

All community media embrace some or all of these principles, and apply them in different ways and degrees, depending on their local and national contexts.

Who owns community media?

Community ownership operates at both a practical level and at the level of community perception. Both levels are important: community media are most sustainable where there is actual community ownership *and* a strong sense of community ownership.

In some places, ownership is legally defined. In South Africa, the law states that a community radio station must be owned and controlled by an elected board representing all sectors of the community. In practice, board members

are elected at Annual General Meetings (AGMs) and serve for one or two years, depending on the station's constitution. In other places community media may be owned by NGOs, religious institutions, cultural associations, municipalities, or universities. In Afghanistan where (until recently) there were no regulations specifically for community radio, most community radio stations

“When radio fosters the participation of citizens and defends their interests; when it reflects the tastes of the majority and makes good humour and hope its main purpose; when it truly informs; . . . when everyone’s words fly without discrimination or censorship, that is community radio.”

— José Ignacio López Vigil in *Manual urgente para Radialistas Apasionados* (1997, quoted on Comunica website, www.comunica.org).

are owned by private individuals and run as businesses. In Ireland, the broadcast regulations make it possible for a variety of organizations (churches, universities, NGOs) to own community radio and television stations, but stipulate that the owners must make provision for membership, management, and staffing by the community that is served. In this way, the Irish system ensures that

there is community control and accountability without actual community ownership. (The question of community media ownership is further discussed the [The Need For An Enabling Environment](#).)

In practice, the nature of governance and membership structures can be more important than the legal system. In a study of six local independent radio stations in Africa, *Developing Radio Partners*⁷ found it difficult to see a clear link between legal ownership and community service. Among the six stations were a community-owned station dominated by a single church, an NGO-owned station that went way beyond its NGO mission in community service, and a for-profit station that valued the notion of perception of community ownership so highly that it gave over running of the station to members of the community several times a year.

The community-owned but church-dominated station was South African. In this case, the community was not happy: people flocked to the annual general meeting; objected to the high proportion of church programming, elected a new board, and instructed the new board to restore general community programming. The community’s intervention was made possible by the legal environment that makes community ownership a condition for obtaining and retaining a license. This example demonstrates how an enabling legal environment can protect community media from being hijacked by a faction or group within a community. (The example of [Jozi FM](#), is another example of community action to safeguard their airwaves.)

For the NGO station, in Tanzania, and the commercial station, in Zambia, community service may be less secure. In the case of the NGO station, there is a risk that the station will close if the

host NGO’s funding dries up; and there may be nothing to stop the owner of the commercial station from selling the business to someone who is less concerned with community service and more with profit.

These examples tell us that legal community ownership is neither a prerequisite for nor a guarantee of sustainable community service. However, where structures are representative and processes are democratic, community ownership has the highest potential to guarantee sustainable community service. Legal safeguards are important—but only if communities are empowered to take up legal challenges.

Nonprofit structure

A nonprofit structure is an important way of distinguishing community media from other media forms. It also safeguards community media from pure commercial interests, which might favor cheaper music and talk-show formats. As with ownership, nonprofit structures can be legislated. In countries where there is no community media legislation, however, some community media initiatives operate as businesses and nonetheless provide vibrant community services.

Being nonprofit does not mean that you have to be poor. The main difference between commercial and community media is that profit made by commercial media benefits individuals or investors, and profit made by community media is returned into service provision or used for the benefit of the community.

Some countries have regulations that enforce public financial accountability and transparency. In the United Kingdom, community media institutions can register as charities. If they do, they must comply with the Charities Act, which stipulates that organizations earning more than a certain amount must

post their annual accounts on the Charities Commission website for public viewing.⁸ In South Africa, the radio licensing authority has powers to monitor expenditure and audit financial records to ensure that communities benefit from any surplus funds. The logic of this is clear—extra cash generated through a community resource is seen to belong to the community.

Although they are often criticized as intrusive, provisions like these can be helpful to community media. Public accountability generates trust and trust is more likely to attract donor and community support. To fulfil the requirements of public accountability, community media must develop strong and effective financial planning and management systems, which are the foundation of financial sustainability. An interesting aspect of the research for this guide was how difficult we found it to obtain financial records from community media organizations. In some cases, managers were protective of the information and nervous about sharing it; in others, it was simply not available in any organized form, suggesting a great need for financial management training.

Community service

Community service is at the heart of community media. All community media must have a community and the intention to serve and build the community. In the community media environment, communities tend to be defined in terms of geography (a group of people living in a particular location) or interest (religion, politics, culture, hobby, or any other interest). A quality community service is one that:

- Validates and strengthens communities
- Covers topics that are relevant to the community
- Encourages community discussion and debate

- Facilitates community participation in production and dissemination of content
- Ensures that voices of marginalized, stigmatized, and repressed sectors of communities are heard
- Provides spaces for perspectives and views that are alternative to those originating from mainstream media

Debate about community, what it is and whether community even exists has been ongoing. Many writers point out that communities are not made up of one kind of person, but are divided along lines that include class, gender, religion, age, interest, sexual orientation, and ethnicity. These divisions make questions of shared ownership and service more complex.

By creating new forms of community that are far more loosely defined, the Internet and online media have forced us to look again at how we see community. Online communities—also known as virtual communities—communicate primarily through computers, blogging, email, and text-based chat rooms.

In [Small Towns Find a Voice Online](#), Persephone Miel discusses some of the new forms of online media. Miel draws a distinction between big, international virtual communities, and small, geographically focused community-service websites. The big virtual communities use computers to discuss or share information about particular interests and issues, but the communication is unmanaged. Smaller, geographically focused community-service websites have similarities with traditional community media, in that they are owned by communities and communities participate in producing and sharing content.

The Internet has also created many new opportunities for community media to generate income and cut costs.

Community participation: the key to community communications

Participation is the key defining feature of community media; it is what places community media outside of traditional media models, in which audiences are passive receivers of messages. In the community media model, senders and receivers together create messages and meaning through participatory processes. Community media theorists distinguish “meaningful” community participation from other forms of (less meaningful) participation seen in commercial and public media: writing letters; sending photographs; inviting people to call in.

Meaningful participation happens at all levels of community media, and will involve many activities, including ownership, consultation on topics and formats, training, production and distribution of messages, audience research, and finance. Participatory processes generate a strong sense of community ownership; media are demystified, and by participating, communities learn valuable communications and media literacy skills and understandings.

ENDNOTES

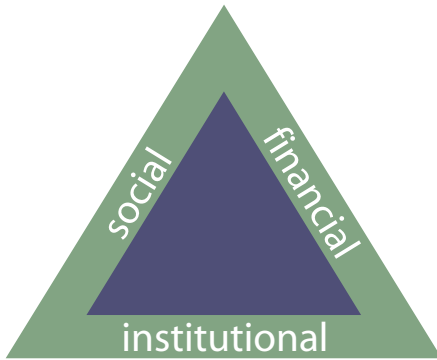
- 1 For a history of CASET, see the chapter titled “Making waves with CASET,” by Edric Gorfinkel, in *A Passion for Radio*, edited by Bruce Girard. Published in 1992 (Black Rose Books, Montreal), *A Passion for Radio* is out of print, but an electronic version can be found at www.comunica.org.
- 2 AMARC is the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (it stands for Association Mondiale de Radiodiffuseurs Communautaires). See www.amarc.org.
- 3 Edric Gorfinkel, quoted in “Community radio in post-apartheid South Africa: The case of Bush Radio in Cape Town,” by T. Bosch, *Transformations* 10 (February 2005). See www.transformationsjournal.org/journal/issue_10/article_05.shtml.

- 4 Summarized from the IBA Act of 1993.
In 1999, another law—the Broadcasting Act—was passed. The two laws work together to define and regulate community radio and the licensing process. Both laws can be downloaded from the ICASA website, www.icasa.org.za (under Legislation).
- 5 The South African Advertising Research Bureau, 2008. Community Radio Summary, November 2008, www.saarf.co.za, under RAMS (radio)/Radio Listening: Community.
- 6 See www.amarc.org (under About AMARC/What is Community Radio). See also www.comunica.org for 14 definitions of community radio.
- 7 Fairbairn, J., and B. Siemering. (2006). Guidebook on Sustainability. Developing Radio Partners. www.developinradiopartners.org (under Programs and Projects / community radio sustainability project). [[AU: Publisher/location info?]]
- 8 See www.charity-commission.gov.uk.

It's Not Just About the Money: Approaches to Sustainability

At the heart of the definition of community media are community participation in the production and dissemination of messages and community service. What we want to sustain, therefore, is a valued and high quality community service, and community participation in producing the service.

In their manual on setting up community media centers (CMCs), Alfonso Gumucio-Dagron and Hezekiel Dlamini define sustainability as having three aspects: social, institutional, and financial sustainability.¹ To become sustainable, an organization must succeed in all three aspects.



Gumucio-Dagron and Dlamini's model for understanding community media sustainability is represented as a tripod.

Social sustainability refers to all the social processes that are needed to create sustainable community media, including community participation in governance, management, operations, content production, generation of income, and feedback.

Gumucio-Dagron and Dlamini list three conditions to achieve social sustainability:

- Community ownership of the communication process. As discussed previously, this includes both legal/official structure and the community's sense of owning the process.
- Development of local content, through community participation in the selection of topics, research, writing, filming, recording, and editing.

- Language and cultural relevance. One of community media's greatest strengths is its ability to communicate with communities in local language and dialects, and to be able to address sensitive issues in ways that take into account local cultures. This is important for community media everywhere.

As discussed earlier, under [Who owns community media?](#), [Community service](#) and [Community participation](#), community is a complex concept. Communities—whether they are communities of interest or geographic communities—are never made up of one kind of person. There are always divisions, along language, cultural, gender, age, income, and many other lines. This has an impact on community ownership.

The size of communities claimed by some community media calls into question the community media definition of community: [Jozi FM](#), broadcasting to vast suburb of Soweto (Johannesburg, South Africa) claims a community of six million people. [Radio Salus](#) in Rwanda claims to provide a community service, but covers the whole of Rwanda; effectively, Radio Salus is a national station.

Institutional sustainability refers to the policies, governance structures, management structures and styles, staffing, internal relationships, and practices, as well as partnerships with organizations and the legal and regulatory environment.

The important issues in achieving institutional sustainability are:

- [Enabling legislation, regulation and policies](#) for community media. An enabling legal environment is ideal, but it works best if communities understand their rights and know how to use the law.
- Internal democracy; staff and management systems; stable governance. Community participation in decision making requires democratic management structures. Although most community media are staffed by volunteers, they should be under contract, so they know their roles, responsibilities, and rights. Stable governance is essential to sustainability: the board of directors is ultimately responsible for overseeing finances. If the books are not properly kept or there is mismanagement of funding, this can jeopardize sustainability, as the examples of [Jozi FM](#) and [Radio Izuba](#) demonstrate.

“Community media services in any form—radio, theatre, Internet, telephone, or video—need community participation for their creation as well as for their use and survival.”

— Alfonso Gumucio-Dagron and Hezekiel Dlamini (2005) in *Sustainability of CMCs*, cited previously, p. 103.

- **Appropriate technology.** Most community media need equipment. When planning and building community media, make sure that the equipment is affordable, durable, easy to use, and whenever possible, able to be maintained by local technicians.
- **Networking and convergence.** [Community media associations and networks](#) enable sharing of learning, pooling of expertise, sharing content, lobbying and advocating on behalf of members, and many other activities. Convergence refers to the ability of community media to use new digital technologies to diversify their services.

Financial sustainability is the organization’s ongoing income-generating potential, and includes cash and donations of goods and services.

Community media generate income in many different ways. There are two considerations that are fundamentally important. The first is independence—because of their reach, mass media of all kinds are vulnerable to control by powerful interests. The most obvious concern is state or political control, but media are also vulnerable to powerful commercial, religious and other interests. The second consideration is to ensure that that income-generation activities are consistent with the mission and goals of the organization. To be consistent, [Community Radio Madanpokhara](#) in Nepal, for example, will broadcast advertisements—but not for cigarettes, alcohol, and gambling, which are seen as bad for the health of the community.

Financial contributions can include donations from individuals, local business, institutions, and local government. Haiti’s [Radio Vwa Peyizan Abriko](#), for example, organizes fan clubs and asks fans to give what they can afford; Community [Radio Madanpokhara](#) in Nepal

asks listeners to donate to the station the equivalent of a handful of rice.

“In-kind” support most often takes the form of volunteer labor—writers, editors, and producers can all be volunteers. Usually, volunteers are unpaid, but some community media pay volunteers stipends. [Jozi FM](#) pays 45 volunteers a monthly stipend; [Radio Vwa Peyizan Abriko](#), on the other hand, has volunteers who contribute time and money. Other examples of community donations include food, stationary, and services such as equipment maintenance and accounting.

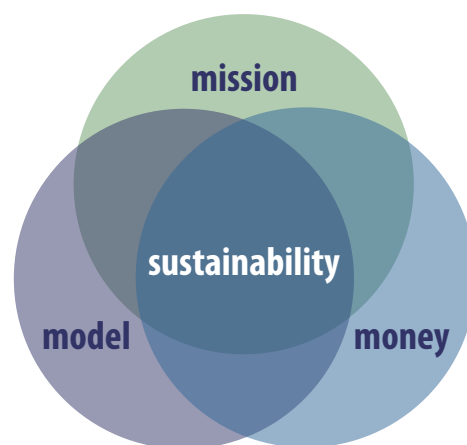
There is wide recognition that participatory processes are the backbone of community media, but they are also time-consuming and expensive. Volunteers work hard, but they must also be organized and managed; they need space, sustenance, resources, and transportation. Yet these costs tend to remain hidden, and it is rare to find the benefits and costs of community participation reflected in business plans and budgets.

A useful planning tool

The Gumucio-Dagron and Dlamini definition of sustainability is especially useful as a planning tool. Too often, sustainability is narrowly used to mean financial sustainability, and social and institutional aspects are neglected in planning. By breaking up the concept, Gumucio-Dagron and Dlamini steer us away from a single focus on financial sustainability. Finance is important—but only insofar as it resources and strengthened social and institutional sustainability. [Media for Development’s](#) community television projects, T.I.M.E and Inside Job productions are good examples of community media.

Sustainability as an interaction between mission, model, and money

The National Council for Voluntary Organizations (NCVO) in the United Kingdom presents a sustainability model that is similar to the tripod model.² According to the NCVO model, sustainability of any community organization requires means finding the right balance between the three interrelated areas of mission, model, and money.



Mission

The most sustainable mission statements are clear and focused. Concerned about being inclusive, community media may develop broad public service “information, education, and entertainment” missions. However, this is commercial-media thinking. A broad mission dilutes the notion of community service by making it hard to distinguish from commercial or public media. Community media are generally less well resourced, and staffed by nonprofessional volunteers who are less experienced than commercial and public media. They are therefore unlikely to be able to produce services of the same quality.

A broad mission also makes it much harder to measure impact.

Model

The model is the structure of the organization and all the people, relationships, activities, and infrastructure needed to deliver the service. This is similar to institutional sustainability as described in the tripod model, discussed elsewhere. Sustainable models are ones that can be efficiently managed. In terms of financial sustainability, the most important issue is to understand what the model costs.

Community media models are built around community participation. In community media, something that is often overlooked is the cost of community participation, that is, the cost in time and money of mobilizing, organizing, and managing community participation; in training participants and volunteers; and in transport and subsistence of community members involved in content production. Community participation is mostly seen only in terms of income, as “sweat” equity, but—as with all human resources—there are also costs attached.

Money

The main way of achieving sustainable funding, NCVO argues, is to diversify the funding base so that if any one source dries up or is threatened, alternative funding is available.

A very important issue for community media is independence. Most external funding and support, no matter where it comes from, brings with it agendas or interests. These are sometimes transparent, sometimes hidden. Even the in-kind support of volunteers is sometimes based on their private interests, with volunteers wanting various benefits, from training to status or even possible future jobs.

The best way of ensuring independence is not to allow any one source of funding to become too important. [Jozi FM](#) in South Africa is very successful in

generating income from advertising. But the station has been criticized for neglecting community education and development programming in favor of more commercial and music shows. [Radio Izuba](#) in Rwanda—through institutional weaknesses—may be vulnerable to political control, unless it can diversify its funding base.

Sustainability in the development sector

Writing about sustainability as the concept is used in the international development sector, Simon Bell and Stephen Morse (1999) say that there is confusion between sustaining institutions and sustaining outputs or impact.³ This leads to an emphasis on sustaining the institutions or organizations that produce the outputs, rather than on the outputs themselves. In the development sector, institutional sustainability is valuable only as long as the institution has valued (developmental) outputs. To put it another way, what does it matter if a community media organization that is not producing a valuable community service collapses?

Sustainability in a shared development strategy

Based on practical experiences gained in Mozambique, Birgitte Jallof argues that achieving long-term sustainability of community media is the shared responsibility of all stakeholders, including international or national donors and communities. She uses Gumucio-Dagron’s “[tripod](#)” to help us understand a comprehensive five-tier community radio development strategy developed by UNESCO.⁴ Each of the tiers comprises a set of activities, all of which circle back to institutional, social, and financial sustainability:

- Ensure that the project has strong community ownership. In order to realize this goal, the UNESCO project underwent a one- to two-year “mobi-

lization and capacitation” phase before the arrival of the radio equipment. The aims were to create community structures to own the equipment, to build channels for community participation, and to instill a strong feeling of community ownership.

- Put in place systems for effective training and capacity building. External and internal training capacities are needed. External training can provide valuable leadership, management, and programming and technical skills. But to keep up, community participation stations need internal training systems to train new participants and volunteers all the time. Choose appropriate technology (equipment)—good-quality, sturdy equipment that is easy to understand and maintain, and that will hold up to use by inexperienced people.
- Develop a financial partnership strategy for community and development support. The ability to attract, establish, manage, and maintain partnerships is at the heart of financial sustainability. A financial partnership strategy is not about money—it is about attracting partnerships and managing and maintaining them.
- Impact assessment—it is through [impact assessment research](#) that community media can prove their worth to partners in the community and from outside.

Conclusion

Sustainability is often seen as a goal or end point, as something that organizations must achieve. However, communities are dynamic—they change all the time. Community media organizations that do not respond to changes in their communities’ needs and contexts become irrelevant—and unsustainable, because they lose their value. What is sustainable today may very well not be sustainable tomorrow.

The models mentioned have similarities and differences. What they all agree on is that sustainability is not just about generating income and managing it efficiently. It is about mobilizing the right kinds of resources at the right time, to fit changing needs and contexts. It is about communities, institutions, and finance. It is about mission and ideology. It is not just about the money.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Gumucio-Dagron, Alfonso, and Hezekiel Dlamini. (2005). "Sustainability of CMCs," in Guidebook on setting up a community media center. Unesco. See portal.unesco.org/ci/en/files/15721/1084292960512.pdf/12.pdf.
- 2 An introduction to sustainable funding: Understanding your options. NCVO Sustainable Funding Project, July 2006. See www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/index.asp?id=2090. The National Council for Voluntary Organizations (NCVO) is a support agency for charities and NGOs in the United Kingdom. The book is not available to read online, but can be ordered from NCVO. The NCVO website www.ncvo-vol.org.uk has excellent information about sustainable funding for nonprofit organizations.
- 3 Bell, Simon, and Stephen Morse. (1999). *Sustainability Indicators: Measuring the Immeasurable*. London: Earthscan.
- 4 Jallo, Birgitte. (2004). "Community Radio—For Empowerment and Impact," in *Development Communication* (December).

Sustainable Energy for Sustainable Stations

BY BILL SIEMERING

When you drive into a rural town in Sierra Leone at night, you see a blue haze composed of a toxic mix of kerosene fumes from the little lamps lighting shops along the road, charcoal smoke from cooking fires, and diesel exhaust from electricity generators.

In many developing countries, community radio stations are found in places where grid electricity is nonexistent or at best, and they are prone to frequent and lengthy breakdowns. In the discussion of sustainability, something stands out: many stations could double their available funds by substituting renewable energy sources for diesel-powered generators.

Over half the budget for **Radio Gbafth** in Mile 91, Sierra Leone, is used to pay for diesel fuel that costs US\$5.60 a gallon. Once they connect to grid electricity, Radio Gbafth will be able to extend their hours of broadcasting and use the money currently spent on fuel to provide stipends for some of the volunteers.

Similar stories can be told at countless stations across Africa, Asia, and South America. Some stations are already powered by sustainable energy sources. For example, in Mali, Olivier Alais—Geekcorps' Mali program manager—has been installing solar systems in order to power transmitters and audio equipment at stations. The Geekcorps solar power package for each station includes:

- Six solar panels of 60 watts each (US\$375 each)
- Six batteries of 12 Volt/100 Amps (US\$230 each)
- One charge controller of 45 Amps (US\$600 each)



Radio Vwa Peyizan Abriko in Haiti saves money by using solar power.

Configuration for each station is unique, but in general, Alais estimates that a radio station can be powered by solar with an investment of about US\$4,500–US\$5,000.

Internews Network recently used solar and wind power to establish four community radio stations in Southern Sudan, in places where there is extremely limited or no electricity. South African broadcast equipment supplier and installation engineer Matt Buck, who worked with Internews Network in Southern Sudan, advised very careful planning and the use of more than one energy source. He said that in addition to solar panels, “We also use wind turbine hybrid systems where possible, as this often provides charging at night and increases overall system efficiency.”¹

A few public radio stations in the United States are hydro- and wind-powered, and more stations are turning to alternative sources of energy. (See the links at the end of this piece.) Although radio powered by renewable energy technologies is still relatively new and needs evaluation, the increasing number of stations turning to these alternatives suggests that they are working. One thing is clear: in locations where grid electricity is nonexistent or at

best unreliable, these methods certainly make the day-to-day operation of radio stations cheaper and more effective.

WJFF, Jeffersonville, New York: Hydro-powered radio. www.wjffradio.org/wjff/index.php?section=19

KTAO Radio, Taos, New Mexico: Solar-powered radio. www.ktao.com/home.php

KRCL Community Radio, Salt Lake City Utah: 50% wind-powered radio. www.krcl.org/utahpower.net/Article/Article14573.html

KBSJ Boise State Radio, Jackpot, Nebraska: Wind-powered transmitter. radio.boisestate.edu

HCJB World Radio, Ecuador: Loretto Hydroelectric Project. www.hcjb.org/mass-media/loretto_hydro_project/overview.html; www.hcjb.org

ENDNOTES

- 1 For further information, see the Internews website: www.internews.org/articles/2009/20090130_radioworld_sudan.shtm

Models of Sustainable Funding

The funding climate for all community organizations is changing. The number of organizations seeking funding is increasing and the pool of funds is shrinking. Over the past few years, community organizations have begun turning to new ways of generating income. Here we look at two business models aimed at generating sustainable funding. Both models consider different ways of generating income. The first was developed for the nonprofit sector in the United Kingdom, but its lessons are universal. The second—the “three-legged funding model”—is well known in the community media sector.

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE IN THE NONPROFIT SECTOR

Community media are often registered nonprofit organizations. Before turning to sources of funding, we briefly discuss the main categories of income and expenditure in the nonprofit sector, where many community media organizations operate. Different sources of income will be used to cover different costs.

Expenditure

Most nonprofit organizations divide expenditure, or costs, into core costs (also called overhead or operational costs) and direct project costs.

Core costs are all the expenses that are not connected to running projects. They occur before and after a project has been running, and it is difficult to link them to any particular project. In the community media sector, core costs would include any costs relating to governance (transportation to board meetings; fees to audit accounts). They would also cover any planning and consultation not directly related to a project, fundraising, general training, public relations and marketing, rent, electricity, and salaries. Core costs can be shared with projects, however.

Project costs are all costs directly related to running a particular project. For example, if a donor has funded production and airing of a radio drama series, direct project costs would include training volunteers to produce the series, scripting the series, airtime to market and broadcast the series, and monitoring and evaluation of impact.

Income

There are also two categories of income:

General income (also called nonproject income, or unrestricted income). General income is usually used to cover core costs. The main source of general income in the community media sector is advertising or individual donations (gifts) from the community members or businesses (this can be money or supplies and services).

Project income (also called project income or restricted income). This is income that is attached to a particular contract or project and that can be used only according to the terms of the contract. The main sources of restricted income in the community media sector are grant funding and sponsorship of content and programs.

An effective financial sustainability plan includes all core costs and project costs, and considers all possible sources of income and funding.

When developing a financial sustainability plan, the most important questions are:

- What are your core costs and how much money is needed to cover them?
- What are the best sources of income to cover them?
- How much money do you want to raise from each source?

The final question helps avoid overreliance on one source of funding.

Moving from gifts to trading

The National Council of Voluntary Organizations (NCVO)¹ in the United Kingdom divides funding sources into four categories. The breakdown is illustrated with the diagram on the next page.²

Sustainability is determined by the organization’s ability to draw on each of the four sources in a balanced way, without relying too much on any one source of income.

The gift economy

This term is used to refer to charitable donors, including individuals and businesses (corporations) wanting to benefit an organization.

The best example of community media tapping into the gift economy is the United States, where community radio

| Donor | Funder | Purchaser | Consumer |
|--------------|---------------|-------------------|-------------|
| Gift Economy | Grant Funding | Structured Market | Open Market |



stations hold several fundraising drives every year, calling on members of the public to donate to their radio stations. Bill Siemering discusses this kind of fundraising in his article on [National Public Radio](#) in the United States.

Community media all over the world raise funds through gifts. [Radio Madanpokhara](#) in Nepal asks its listeners to give the equivalent of a handful of rice to sustain the station; [Radio Vwa Peyizan Abriko](#) organizes listeners into fan clubs and asks them to give whatever they can afford. Community media are increasingly using websites to invite people to support their work through gifts. Bush Radio in Cape Town, South Africa, for example, invites visitors to its website to “Give us a hand-up not a hand-out” (www.bushradio.co.za, under Keep Bush Live!).

The advantage of gift support is that the money is unrestricted—it can be used as necessary within the broad boundaries of your mission statement. Individuals and organisations giving gifts do not want a specific return on their investment; they are providing general support to help you do your work.

Donor or grant funding

This is contracted money, from nongovernmental organization (NGOs) or government donors, private foundations, or trusts. In seeking grant funding, community media should look for funders and donors whose mission and goals are closely aligned to the mission and goals of the community media outlet. Grant funding is almost always tied to particular projects or specific purposes. The

donor expects that grant funding will produce outputs that are agreed upon in advance. Once the grant period is over, the donor expects a report that includes measurement (evaluation) of results.

Most grantors have guidelines about how their grants may be spent. Any changes in expenditure must be negotiated in advance. (For more about grant support, see [Making Donors Work for You](#).)

The structured market

The “structured market” refers to situations where goods or services are paid for under conditions set out in a contract. Income earned through the structured market is restricted to a particular purpose. The most common ways in which community media use the structured market are:

- Content sponsorship by NGOs or government departments wanting to get messages out. NGOs will often also provide the content, or training of content producers in the topic, so that they can produce the programs in local languages. Contracts specify the number of programs, the content to be included, who will provide the content, costs of production, times of broadcast.

Businesses also sponsor programs; for example, an insurance company might sponsor a program focusing on road safety. With businesses, however, it is important to distinguish between the sponsorship, which promotes the business, and the content of the program, which educates and informs about the issue.

- Training contracts through which community media tap into government or other training funds by offering internships and training. [Media for Development](#) in London does this very effectively for its prisons radio projects, Radio Wanna and T.I.M.E. (Television Information Media Education). [Desi Radio](#), also in London, raises money from the UK government for training.

The open market

The open market is where trading happens—where organizations sell goods and services to make money, in the same way as any business would. The goods and services can be related to the organization’s core business, or they can be completely unrelated. For example, community radio technicians who charge small fees for fixing radios generate income for their station and ensure that listeners have access to programming; however, stations that grow and sell vegetables generate income for the station, activities that are unrelated to broadcasting.

Community media everywhere trade on the open market through advertising—selling page space or broadcast time to businesses to advertise products. Advertising is one of the main sources of unrestricted income for community media. Advertising contracts are signed, but these are different from those described previously under the structured market section. Advertising contracts specify the content of the advertisement, roles, and responsibilities in generating content for the advertisement and producing the advertisement, the length of the advertisement, and when and how often it should be broadcast. However, contracts do not specify how the income should be spent.

Community media—like many nonprofits—are turning to other kinds of

trade to generate income, particularly in developing countries where there are few local businesses that can afford advertising. Examples of trading include farming, provision of photocopying and fax services, offering telephone phone kiosks and cybercafés (where community members are charged for use of facilities, as opposed to community media centers, or CMCs, which provide similar services but are nonprofit structures).

Some community media “trade” services of their staff and volunteers. For example, community media staff and volunteers have newspaper layout and design skills; writing and editing skills; and radio and television production skills that can be sold to NGOs and businesses. Many radio stations hire out popular presenters as disc jockeys to parties and events.

Money earned in this way is unrestricted. But when community media engage in income generating activities that are not related to media, staff and volunteers may have to learn a whole new set of skills relating to running the alternative business. There may also be legal and tax issues that must be taken into account.

The three-legged funding model

Community media also use a “three-legged” model for funding. In this model, income generation is spread across three sources:

- Communities
- Advertisers
- Donors, including NGO and government funding programs³

As with the NCVO model described previously, sustainability is achieved by successfully drawing upon all three sources of funding in a balanced way, without becoming too reliant on any

Advertisements/ads/adverts: Attempts to persuade potential customers to buy or consume more of a particular product, brand, or service. Short, and focused on the product, brand or service.

Advertorial: Advertisements written to look like opinion or news. It is important that advertorials always be identified as such so that readers know that the text is actually an advertisement for a product, brand, or service. This distinction is important in order to maintain the trust and credibility of the community media outlet.

Infomercial: Short or average-length television or radio programs that combine information with a suggestion that the viewer or listener should buy a particular product or service. As with advertorials, it is important to identify infomercials and the fact that a product is being advertised.

one source. Income that is generated evenly from different sources is more stable, as it is unlikely that all of the sources of income will decrease or dry up at the same time.

The first two sources of income—communities and advertisers—generate unrestricted funding that can be used to cover core costs. The third source of funding, from donors and the government, will most often be restricted to a particular contract.

For the three-legged model to work, each of the three funding sources must receive something of value in return:

- Communities benefit from participation and from content.
- Businesses, through advertising, get exposure for their products and services.
- Donors and government want success in their funding efforts (the investment must pay off in terms of social or development impact) or dissemination of education and information content, for example, health or voter education; promoting safer sex practices and human rights; discouraging violence against women or racial discrimination.

Once you have decided upon a funding model, it is possible to develop a sustainability plan. As noted earlier,

these are not the only models of funding. Sustainability is context-based, and different communities and cultures have different economies and will think about income differently.

ENDNOTES

- 1 NCVO; see www.ncvo-vol.org.uk. The website also has a good collection of guides and manuals on financial planning and financial management. Some of the guides can be downloaded from the website; others can be bought from NCVO.
- 2 Graham Collins and Claire Glossop (2006), *An Introduction to Sustainable Funding*, NCVO, page 23. NCVO, London.
- 3 Dennis List bases his book *Participative Marketing for Local Radio* (Original Books, Wellington, 2003) on the three-legged model of funding. The book explores different marketing models for local radio stations and has excellent ideas about how to generate income. Sections of the book are available in English at www.audience dialogue.net/pmlr.html. Originally in English, the book has also been translated into Indonesian and is being translated into Spanish. The Audience Dialogue website, www.audience dialogue.net, also has information and guides on audience research for radio and developing a business plan for online media.

Business Models, Business Plans, and Community Media

A business model explains all the activities that make an organization financially viable, and emphasizes the factors that make it financially sustainable. The aim of the model is to convince potential partners—businesses, banks, funders—that the organization is worth investing in.

A business model is different from a business plan or a sustainability plan in that it describes what *is* happening in the present rather than what is *intended* (planned) to happen. It is a way of understanding and explaining what you do in “business” terms. It answers the question “How do you make money?” The business model will form the core of the [business plan](#).

There is no single business model for community media. Business models of different community media organizations will have many things in common, but each one will also be unique. As discussed in [Models of Sustainable Funding](#), community media are increasingly turning to mixed business models to sustain their services. Desi Radio in the United Kingdom, for example, has a business model built around advertising; however, they also generate income by training community members in media skills and renting out volunteers who dance at weddings. *Homeless Talk*,¹ a community newspaper in South Africa that is owned, run, published, and distributed by homeless people, has a business model that incorporates a wide range of activities: advertising, sponsorship of editorial content, newspaper sales, sales of services (including design and editing), vending publications, media training, and a running childcare center.

A community media organization may include a number of small businesses. The key to financial sustainability is to ensure that all the businesses cover their own costs *and* support the community media service.

What makes up a business model?

Business models generally include the following information:

Idea or need: the mission statement

Community media organizations arise out of a community’s need for a specific service. The service could be broad, such as news and general information, or quite narrow, such as health information. Both the idea and the need are usually expressed in the form of a mission statement, as a set of aims and objectives, or both.

Product: community service, community opportunity

Because community media organizations are generally run as nonprofit entities aiming to produce social benefit or gain, “product” is best expressed as the “outputs” or “results” of the service.

For community media, the main outputs are:

- Community development/social gain/community empowerment.
- Community communications—news, information, education, entertainment, development, discussion—the content that is created by and distributed to readers, viewers, and listeners.

Ownership/governance

Community media are ([Who owns community media?](#)) owned in a variety of ways. They may be owned by communities, in the form of community-elected or appointed boards. Or they may be owned by NGOs, educational institutions, or local government structures—or even individuals or businesses,

as long as there is a commitment to community service and to community participation in producing the service.

The owner will be responsible for the following items:

- The legal right to run the project, including registration and title for newspapers, or broadcast license for radio or TV
- The assets of the organization: infrastructure, equipment, computers, vehicles
- Any agreements or contracts with partners (donors, advertisers, community groups), staff, and volunteers

Customers

Customers are people who buy goods or services. Because community media organizations are both owned and produced by communities, communities are the producers and the beneficiaries of the service, rather than the customers of the service. With the exception of some online community media organizations that are funded through purchased subscriptions and some community newspapers that are sold, people who receive community media generally do not pay for it.

However, community media do have customers, and who they are depends on the business model. Most community media build or try to build business models based on advertising sales or sponsorship of content. The customers in these models are the advertisers who buy space or airtime, or sponsors who want the name of their organization, company, or service linked to particular content, as well as to the media outlet.

For community media organizations that run other businesses to subsidize their media operations, customers will be the people who buy other goods and services. For example, some community radio stations have set up cybercafés

and rent out computers to clients. In the case of *Homeless Talk*, mothers buy childcare services.

Partnerships

The business model will include details of other individuals and organizations that support the organization and explain what value they bring. In the development sector, donors and funding agencies are important partners. They provide start-up grants, operational and development support, and development expertise. Other partners can include local institutions. For example, schools can organize children to write for community newspapers or to produce radio content, university departments can provide expertise on many subjects, business associations can encourage corporate donations, and training institutions can train community media staff and volunteers.

Managing partnerships absorbs a good deal of energy and time. However, partnerships are fundamental to sustainable business models, and great care should be taken to build and maintain them.

Competencies

Competencies are organizational capabilities, and include all the skills required to sustain the service, including leadership and management skills, content production, business and technical skills, partnership building skills, networking skills, research skills, and many others.

Financial information

Costs

What does it cost to run the organization? It is important to analyze all costs, taking care to differentiate between core or general costs, and project costs (see [Models of Sustainable Funding](#)). It is also important to consider how core (or general) costs are reflected in the budget. Many donors have policies precluding funding of core costs, like salaries,

rent, or electricity. However, they will consider core costs if they are included as a part of project costs.

There are various ways of drafting project budgets to ensure that core costs are included. The Esmee Fairbairn Foundation² in the United Kingdom provides a good guide on their website, www.esmeefairbairn.org.uk, on drafting project budgets that include core costs.³

Income

What are the organization's sources of income? This section includes information about all the different ways in which the organization can make money. (See [Models of Sustainable Funding](#).)

Developing a business plan

A business plan is a complete description of an organization and its plans for the next one to three years. It suggests who will support the organization and demonstrates why they should support it. The business plan provides financial forecasts to show that the organization is sustainable. It explains what finance is already available and what finance is needed.

A business plan is both a way of organizing activities (through the planning process) and convincing donors and investors that the organization is viable and worth funding. It should be short (no more than 10 pages), properly researched, well presented, convincing, and honest.

The business model forms the core of the business plan.

Developing a business plan requires planning. A good plan gives direction and security; it ensures that activities are structured and are consistently moving the organization forward towards its goals. However, the plan should not be binding; rather, it should provide a

base from which to be flexible. Having a plan helps the organization identify new opportunities and respond to them without losing sight of its goals. Once it is written up, the plan is both a guide to activities and a useful way of explaining to outsiders what the organization does and why it is worth funding.

Resources

There are thousands of books and articles about business planning and drafting and presenting business plans. The following three websites provide good examples and insights for community media:

- www.comunica.org: Explore the Community Media Management Resources blog.
- www.radioregen.org: See Community Radio Toolkit, or www.communityradiotoolkit.net
- www.esmeefairbairn.org.uk: See Our Funding/Business Planning and Costing Projects

ENDNOTES

- 1 See *Homeless Talk*—www.homelesstalk.org.za, under Services.
- 2 No relation to the author/editor of this guide.
- 3 David Irwin (2007), "Costing projects & programmes in the voluntary sector," www.esmeefairbairn.org.uk/docs/FullCostRecovery.pdf.

Making Donors Work for You

There are many different kinds of donor organization, working at all levels—international, national, local—and delivering vastly different amounts of money, to projects big and small. It is most likely that at some point everyone engaged in community media will have been touched by at least one donor, either directly through being funded, or indirectly through receiving content or training, attending funded conferences or workshops, being evaluated, or through membership of funded forums or associations.

The funding environment is constantly changing. Instability of the global economy is squeezing government, philanthropic and corporate giving. Government development agencies, like the Danish government aid agency (Danida)¹ or the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID),² are subject to both economic pressures and changes in policy and agenda when new governments are voted in.

International aid also follows political upheavals and humanitarian crises. European funding budgets for Africa and Latin America shrank considerably when the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 exposed need for development support in the new countries born out of the dismantling of the Soviet Union. The 2004 Asian tsunami, which killed over 250,000 people, acted like a magnet for donors anxious to provide relief for hundreds of thousands of desperate people whose villages and livelihoods were swept away by the giant waves.

A lot has been written about grant funding, its benefits and flaws. Grant funding has kickstarted many excellent community media projects—and in some places, whole community media sectors. In Mozambique, for example, there would most likely be no community radio stations if donors like the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) had not become involved.

In South Africa, a much wealthier country than Mozambique, community radio stations serving disadvantaged communities were heavily reliant on Open Society Foundation for South Africa³ for start-up funds, equipment, and development support.

But grant funding often comes with restrictions on spending and weighty bureaucratic reporting procedures that small projects often do not have the capacity to manage. Grant funding can also create dependency. Where there are flaws in the way that funds are delivered, the quality of projects can be negatively affected. Many community media projects have collapsed or nearly collapsed through mismanagement of grants. The experience of [Radio Izuba](#) in Rwanda is one example.

Mismanagement can arise out of loose contracting and reporting requirements; setting unrealistic goals and targets; and inadequate assessment of the situation. Responsibility in cases like these must be shared between the grant provider and the project. Mismanagement can also arise out of corruption and inexperience. However, if care is taken at the outset, there are fewer opportunities for mismanagement.

Grant funding works best under the following conditions:

- Donors have in-country offices and staff to visit, discuss needs, and assess applications on-site.

“It is fundamental that development is seen as a long-term process. It implies a gradual unfolding of people’s latent capacity to innovate, to deal with setbacks or adversity, to take control over their lives, to hold onto a vision for a better future, to seize opportunities, to develop and nurture a variety of relationships, to learn from experiences and to be involved in civil and political life.”

— John Wilson and Dan Taylor (2005), *Financing Development Practice: How can we start to make the difference that makes a difference?* (United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service, www.un-ngls.org/cso/cso6/financing.doc)

- The partnership is developmental and donors are willing to negotiate terms and conditions.
- Agendas and interests are open and transparent.
- Relationships between donors and grant applicants are equal and respectful.
- Grant applicants have other sources of income to tap into.
- Applicants have access to the Internet, and can conduct research online to find out about the donor's policies, criteria, and funding procedures.

Grant funding has advantages. The key advantage is that some donors are willing to give large sums during the start-up phase, enabling new community media to find their feet and over time to develop other partnerships and ways of generating income. Donors are able to connect their partner organizations to international support networks, and will also sometimes provide other valuable support, like organizational development and training.

However, grant funding also has disadvantages:

- It tends to be short-term—most partnerships last from one to three years.
- Unless a sustainability plan is built into the partnership from the beginning, grant funding can create dependency.
- Managing grants can take a lot of energy—writing applications and submitting reports takes skill and time.

How to Write a Successful Funding Proposal and Achieve Your Goals

To be successful, a funding proposal must be:

Comprehensive: Cover all the information that is required by the donor.

Relevant: Include only information that is needed by the donor. Do not include information that is not relevant—this just gives project assessors more to read.

Attractive: Make the layout and design inviting. Break up the text with clear headings; include photographs; include your logo on the front cover; if you are delivering a hard copy, bind it with a cover that makes a reader want to open it.

Coherent: The proposal must be properly planned. There should be a narrative flow—with an introduction and conclusion. The information should be presented in logical order.

There are four stages to writing a funding proposal:

Understand the donor's strategic aims and objectives

What motivates the donor? What are the donor's concerns? What do they need to know about you? Do they have a special format for a proposal? Are you eligible—and can you fulfil the requirements?

Most donor organizations have websites explaining their missions, policies, and applications procedures, and what they do and don't fund. Many have application forms. Some donor websites also include useful guides to strategic planning, writing proposals, and drafting budgets. If you can't go to the website, write to the donor or call and ask for information and an application pack.

Define the proposal

Once you are clear about what you want the funds for, describe your idea. This description will be your opening statement, and should be clear, short, simple, and motivating. The opening statement must grab the donor's attention. It should include the following basic information about your organization:

- What the organization does
- A very short description of what you want funds for
- The expected impact of the project you want the funds for
- How the donor's support will help you achieve your objectives
- How you will assess the impact of the project

Plan the proposal

Brainstorm the information you want to put into the proposal, and then group the information under headings, such as background, aims, . Arrange the headings in logical order and include your points under each heading. Work through the document and change headings or rearrange information if you need to.

Write the proposal

Write a first draft, and then get at least one other person to read it. Based on feedback, write a second draft (and a third if you need to) and get the same person to read it again, to see whether it makes sense. Once you are sure that the content is fine, write a final draft, paying special attention to spelling, layout, and presentation. Add photographs, graphs, and statistics. Proofread and edit

Tips for writing funding proposals

Don't just ask for something.

Market your project as an investment opportunity.

Success sells more than sympathy.

You do great work—there's no need to ask for a hand-out.

Tell a story.

Your story will go something like this—here's a need, here's a response, here's a plan to make it happen, here's how the donor fits in, this is how all of our lives will improve, and this is how we will prove it.

Don't just make an application.

Develop a relationship. Some donors are keen to develop a constructive dialogue with the grant recipient in order to ascertain what kind of funding best meets the organization's needs, and where appropriate, to provide resources to enable the organization to grow and develop.

Tips selected from the National Council of Voluntary Organizations website, Advice on Funding Proposals, www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/sfp/funding?id=2123&terms=motivat - Understand.

- The need for your service—a brief description of the need that you are addressing. Why it exists, what solutions are being provided by others (including the state, the private sector, other NGOs). How your work fits in with other services.
- The structures of the organization, and who is involved—donors are particularly interested in how staff are accountable to board members and to the community. An organogram/ org chart (diagram of organizational structures) is a useful way of illustrating governance and reporting relationships. Include a list of the names of your board and staff members in an appendix.
- Partnerships and affiliations—is your organization affiliated with any association or forum? Who are your partners and supporters?
- Aims—explain the overall aims of the organization.
- Objectives and plans—what are your long-term and short-term objectives? What are your plans for the next couple of years?
- Very important—a monitoring and evaluation plan. Donors want to know what results and impact their “investment” has produced, and many donors will fund monitoring and evaluation as part of their grant.
- A business plan—the Hyperlink to business plan spells out your plans in detail.
- A budget explaining:
 - What the project will cost
 - What parts of the budget you are asking the donor to fund
 - What other income you already have or are expecting to come in

- Contents page—if your proposal is longer than 10 pages, include a table of contents with page numbers at the beginning.

Adapted from “Curriculum for Training Community Radio Station Managers,” prepared by Benita Pavlicevic for the Open Society Foundation for South Africa, 1999.

ENDNOTES

- 1 www.um.dk/en.
- 2 www.dfid.gov.uk.
- 3 The Open Society Foundation for South Africa is a member of the Soros Foundations Network, which was started by the philanthropist George Soros. See www.soros.org.

carefully to get rid of any mistakes and formatting problems.

Basic information to include in the proposal includes the following:

- Mission statement—include this early in the proposal.
- Background—a brief history of the organization, who founded it, when and why. Who you serve and where you are based.

Getting Your Support to Community Media Right

BY BIRGITTE JALLOV

In your opinion, what is an ideal donor strategy for supporting development of community media? This was the question posed to me by the writer and editor of this guide. My immediate response was that supporting community media has such great value for everyone involved that it is not very difficult at all.

Value for the funding/development organization:

A community radio station is a powerful and positive tool for reaching communities. Community radio means that information is being listened to and trusted; information is turned into communication as community broadcasters work with it. Funding community media means developing community capacity to communicate about important issues, about the future, and about the community's dream of a better life for themselves and their children. In many places, it means 90% listener-ship—often more.¹

For the community radio station:

Donors bring many resources. Interaction with professional development agents can help communities find concrete ways of realizing their dreams and solving problems, and donors can provide expertise and funding to help turn wishes into realities—for example, having money for a vehicle to visit parts of the community living far away from the station.

The partnership at the core of sustainability

The core message to the funder is to enter into an engaged partnership that will benefit both parties. A partnership that will generate sustainability must have a solid foundation. But building a solid foundation is not easy. I have worked with these issues in different contexts

for more than 20 years as a development facilitator. I have firsthand experience of what it means to be in the middle—between the community-based project, the international development agency, and sometimes governments—working to mediate different experiences, expectations, perceptions, and ideas about development and what community radio is and can do.

Although all parties involved *say* that they want community participation, many agendas influence the process.

The funders: dilemmas based on tradition and regulations

International development agencies sometimes think that establishing a community radio station involves only equipment, initial training, payment of start-up and running costs for a few months or a couple of years . . . and off you go!

In some cases, funds for community radio creation are given to the national government, who asks their public service broadcaster (or government/state radio) to establish stations that more often than not become small local public radio stations. The stations are seldom owned by the community; once up and running, they operate with limited community involvement. It is no surprise, then, when there is no community empowerment and the station fails to address local development challenges.

The explanations most often given for

these kinds of “quick-fix” solutions are that funds must be spent within the donors’ budgetary cycles; that results must be quickly proved; that swift delivery shows that the agreement was serious and not just another development promise turned cold. But in my experience, it is possible to plan slower processes involving bottom-up development in which communities are consulted and engaged. In processes like these, the results to be measured are community development and empowerment, rather than the amount of hardware delivered and number of stations launched.

The community: impatience, high expectations, and needs

I have also met with representatives of communities who are sceptical about slower community development and bottom-up processes: is this just another so-called development agency with impressive promises and plans that are never transformed into action?

I have met people in communities who initially engage in development of a community radio station, but, as time goes by, become impatient and consider abandoning the process. It is important to listen carefully to participants at this stage, and to find the right balance of effort and time. But it is still important to persist. Development has to be done right; in the end people, will realize the benefit that comes from owning, managing, and deeply understanding the community radio station.

Many people participating in donor-funded community projects expect money to flow in and jobs to be created. When they realize that community radio is based on volunteer support, there is disappointment, and some participants leave. Those who remain behind and are willing to take part in the kinds of activities needed to bring about longer-term development objectives will form the core organizing group for the station.

The role of the development facilitator

Community development facilitators are most often people from who do not live in the communities where they work. This is one of the factors that causes the early stages (until local players take over) to take a long time to ripen and mature.

However, the role of the development facilitator is crucial: mediating, explaining, and making sure that both the funder and the community understand that adjusting the funding framework to allow for a slower process is the right thing to do. It is through slower processes that community radio will realize its promise as an agent of community development, and it is through slower processes that communities will realize the value of the station. A radio station that contributes to development and that people value will be sustainable—and everyone’s investment will pay off.

What does a funder need to do to get it right?

First, clarify what kind of station you are supporting. Do you want to support development of a small local public radio station, or is your goal the development of a community-owned and community-run radio station. The approach will be very different. To support development of a community radio station, the funder should consider the following steps:

- Identify whether radio is the right channel for addressing development needs.
- Develop plans for a community-based development process, in which the community makes decisions and implements plans.
- Facilitate the process from the beginning, but hand over facilitation to local players as time goes by.
- Ensure that the process builds on local culture and tradition.
- Request that all interest groups in the community be involved.
- Agree to a planning phase that lasts at least a year before installing the equipment. Once the equipment arrives, it is difficult to find time for meetings and community planning processes.
- Ensure the development of an effective organizational framework with transparency and good internal governance.
- Provide for ongoing training, including methods like coaching and study tours, and make space for ad hoc crash courses and seminars to address problems as they come up. Make sure to train local trainers.
- Plan for effective involvement by community members in editorial groups.
- Ensure that equipment is durable, repairable, and appropriate for local conditions.
- Plan for slim budgets and build realistic sustainability plans.
- Support development of national radio networks, and associations and forums that will lobby for ongoing sector development and support.
- Support development community-oriented research methods to establish the impact of community media, and support the actual research.

- Where other donors are present, find ways of coordinating support to ensure development is coherent and not competitive.
- Market donor programs—many organizations are unaware of existing opportunities.

Good luck!

Birgitte Jallof has worked for 25 years with media development, press freedom, communication for empowerment, and community radio in 50 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. Jallof also served as an advisor to the Community Media Sustainability Guide.

ENDNOTES

- 1 This figure is based on impact assessment studies carried out by Jallof in Mozambique.

The Role of National Networks in Sustaining Community Media

Associations and networks are critically important to the development and eventual sustainability of community media. The best known global network is AMARC (www.amarc.org), the giant World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters. Organized into five regions—Africa, Asia Pacific, Latin America, Europe and North America—AMARC has over 4,000 members. Most of these are community radio stations, but AMARC also embraces community media federations and other stakeholders.

Associations and networks operate at the intercontinental, regional and national levels and perform different functions. In Colombia, there are 23 regional groupings, but there is no strong national association. Historically a centralized national association, South Africa's National Community Radio Forum is establishing decentralized "hubs" to provide services to stations grouped according to region and language. One activity of the hubs will be to market groups of stations to advertisers. Similarly, Peru's *Coordinadora Nacional de Radio* has an intermediary agency to represent its members in the provinces to national advertisers. In some places, like Mali, networks have both community and commercial stations as members.

In most countries where there are flourishing community media there are national associations and networks. Most networks perform functions that go way beyond their core work of lobbying and advocating on behalf of their members. In some places, community media associations were established in order to create and build community media sectors. For example, the Community

Radio Association¹ in the United Kingdom was launched in 1983 as a membership body to lobby and advocate for an enabling environment some 20 years before the first community radio station was licensed; the National Community Radio Forum (NCRF)² in South Africa was launched in 1992, three years before the first station was licensed.

In countries where community media are better off, national associations can earn a fair percentage of their income from membership fees, but almost all also receive grant support and/or public funding and seek other ways of generating income. Olon, in the Netherlands, is an example of how networks can diversify their income base. Representing some 300 broadcasting organizations that provide radio television, text television, teletext and Internet services, Olon receives over half of its income from funds distributed by the Dutch Broadcasting Services Corporation. The balance of its funding comes from membership fees, services charged to members, and project income. The Community Media Association in the United Kingdom's income comes from a combination of grants, membership fees and service provision, including selling Internet streaming services to member stations.

Despite their value, networks and associations also struggle with financial sustainability, particularly in places where membership cannot afford to pay for services or fees. In some places, networks are heavily reliant on grant funding.

A World Bank Institute study of the development of community radio in five countries³ found that national or sub-national networks were instrumental to the development of community radio. The study identified nine ways that they can support community radio.

- Represent member stations in negotiations with government and lobby on their behalf.
- Represent stations in negotiations with other bodies such as performing rights organizations and advertisers.
- Provide advice on license 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 programs.
- Coordinate solidarity actions and campaigns to defend stations under pressure from political or financial interests because of their programming;
- Mobilize support for the stations from donor organizations.
- Provide spaces for debate, exchange of experience, cooperation among stations etc. by organizing meetings, publishing newsletters, websites, and so on.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Now called the Community Media Association – visit www.commedia.org.uk
- 2 See the NCRF website – www.ncrf.org.za
- 3 Girard, Bruce, *Empowering Radio: Good practices in development and operation of community radio – Issues important to its effectiveness*, World Bank Institute, 2007. <http://comunica.org/radio2.0/archives/69>

The Need for an Enabling Environment

BY KATE COYER

The political will to create, nurture, and guide community media and an enabling legal environment are fundamental to long-term sustainability. According to the World Association of Community Broadcasters (AMARC), the lack of proper enabling legislation is the biggest single barrier to community media's social impact and sustainability. After a visit to Croatia to explore the community media environment there, **Kate Coyer** discusses the role that supportive and enabling legislation can play in developing sustainable community media, and discusses some legal and regulatory best practices.

A scan of community radio legislation around the world finds an international sector dominated by a lack of cohesive policy. There are countries with well-established community broadcasting radio sectors, like the Netherlands, Australia, South Africa, Hungary, Canada, and Colombia, and countries where community radio is still not recognized, like Japan and Chile. There are countries in which community radio is permitted but not actively supported or distinguished by law, and there are countries where community radio is expressly forbidden. Even where community radio has legal status, the regulations and policies vary dramatically. Encouragingly, countries as diverse as Argentina, Bolivia, Uganda, India, Bangladesh, and the United Kingdom have recently adopted significant reforms that assist community media.¹

Where there is no licensed community radio, there may be thriving landscapes of unlicensed stations. In Thailand, there is currently no way for local groups to apply for a license, but there are an estimated 4,000 to 7,000 “pirate” radio stations. Even where there is legal community broadcasting, unlicensed “pirate radio” might still operate, because of limitations of national policy, lack of available broadcast frequencies or licenses, or because there are people who

want to operate outside state infrastructure for ideological or political reasons.

In many countries, regulations remain unclear or have built-in limitations. In Indonesia, community radio has had legal status since 2000, but for many years there was no regulatory system in place. As a result, community stations operated in a quasi-legal but unlicensed status. In Bosnia, community radio licenses are available, but to date, not one application has been filed, because the regulation imposes so many limitations that there are very few ways for stations to support themselves financially.

Developing supportive legislation is crucial. Civil society groups, including grassroots groups, community media organizers, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) of all sizes, can play an important role in the development of good policies and regulations through lobbying, participation in policy-making processes, and practice. Civil society participation is crucial to sustain and develop good community media policies.

Key issues in the development of community media frameworks

Case study: Croatia

After World War II, Croatia was a part of Yugoslavia under Communist rule, and the media operated under central-

ized state control. In 1990, on the way to becoming independent, Croatia held its first free elections. However, intense fighting broke out after hundreds of thousands of Croats were forced to flee as a result of violence enacted by ethnic Serbs living in Croatia. Crimes of “ethnic cleansing” were perpetrated on both sides; hundreds of thousands of civilians were displaced, and intermittent armed conflict would continue for a few more years, as ethnic wars and massacres moved from Croatia into Bosnia and Herzegovina. Today, the processes of peace building, reconciliation, and war crime trials continue.

The development of democratic media systems in Croatia has been slow. The state radio and television were reconstructed into a public service broadcasting station, but the government continued to exert substantial influence. Croatia is on the path towards joining the European Union (EU). Because media freedom, independence, and pluralism are important criteria for eligibility to join the EU, Croatia has sought to make improvements in these areas, with some supervision by international organizations.

Croatia is a democratic country, but media reforms are still required. Broadcasting is dominated by commercial industries. Competition laws exist,

but transparency of media ownership remains poor. Civil society activity is weak and nonprofit organizations have suffered, as international development money has virtually dried up in Croatia.

Community media is not recognized as a distinct sector in Croatia. There are opportunities to obtain a radio license

of community media carries negative associations that community advocates attribute to the legacy of Communist rule and the history of ethnic violence in the region.

Despite the obstacles, NEMEZA is part of a growing network of organizations in the region that are working towards

been problems with commercial radio stations applying for licenses under the pretext of community service provision. Similar concerns were documented in a UNESCO report on Nepal,³ which found that a poorly defined policy framework resulted in some stations being captured by local elites.

Strengthen the media environment

A strong media environment has safeguards for a free and open media; the rights of journalists; freedom of expression; the rights of women, racial, ethnic, religious, and other minorities; recognition of nonprofit organizations; and a legal system with the capacity to enforce these rights. Community media will thrive in a strong media environment.

Focus on core principles

There is no single approach to defining community media, and the shape and feel of each national system will reflect local conditions and cultures. However, in most places, community media is recognized at the very least as media that is not-for-profit, participatory, and produced for and by a local audience. Experience also suggests that policy should include the following in definitions of community media:

- Independence from government and commercial entities
- Community service—targeting geographic communities or communities of interest
- Community ownership and management

The question of independence from all levels of government is crucial. Independence can be difficult to ensure in areas where local governments might themselves have high levels of corruption, or might be dominated by a small number of powerful elites. For this and

Useful terms and definitions:

Legislation: A single law or collective body of laws within a legal system.

Policy: A deliberate plan of action to guide decisions and achieve outcomes. Any organization, government, corporation, groups, or individuals might have a number of policies that guide their decision making or spending priorities, for example.

Regulation: A rule or order given by an executive authority or government agency that is typically carried out by the government agency granted the task of overseeing that area, for example, a communication or broadcasting commission. Regulations are often ways through which agencies implement laws and policies.

Criteria: The standards, rules, or statements of need that a decision is based on, or that are used to evaluate what decision should be taken.

as a nonprofit organization, but the requirements are not clear and there are very few stations with this license. In the capital city of Zagreb, there is only a licensed student radio station that functions as a training facility for the journalism program, rather than a community-oriented project. There is also an online radio station at the university that is focused on innovative music and cultural programming.

A new NGO called NEMEZA has been created to lobby on behalf of community radio in Croatia, but they are struggling to meet the basic costs of operating the organization. The two main organizers have full-time employment elsewhere, because they cannot raise enough money to sustain their community media advocacy work. One of the obstacles they must overcome is to educate Croatians about what community media is, because the concept is unfamiliar. For some Croatians, the concept

the establishment of community radio as a distinctive sector of broadcasting. With NEMEZA's struggles in mind, the following sections cover some strategies and practices drawn from experiences in other countries.²

Win recognition

The first step is to get community media recognized by policy and lawmakers as a distinct sector with its own laws and regulations. Experience generally shows that once recognition has been secured, resources (like access to broadcast frequencies) will be allocated. In the [United States, community radio](#) has a long and rich history, but it is not legally recognised as a sector in its own right, as the licensing system distinguishes only between “commercial” and “noncommercial” broadcasters. As a result, community radio stations fight for frequencies with commercial and public broadcasters. In Ghana, there have

other reasons, it is important for policies to have some anticorruption mechanisms, or ways to avoid co-option by local elites. When community media organizations become mouthpieces for local government, they lose credibility. One way of helping prevent control by government, or perceptions of such control, is to channel government support through an independent body.

Lobby for an independent regulator

An independent regulatory agency makes all the difference. The agency (or agencies) that regulate broadcasting and communication has the authority to provide frequencies, grant broadcasting licenses, and regulate content. In some countries, there is one regulatory agency that oversees both the broadcasting spectrum and licensing (such as Ofcom in the United Kingdom). But in others, responsibility for the broadcasting spectrum and licensing is divided between a telecommunications authority and a broadcasting commission. The telecommunications authority will create more space on the radio dial for new stations, and the broadcasting authority will determine who gets the license.

For an independent body to be effective, certain criteria are crucial, including transparency and public consultation on decision making. Regulatory transparency includes publishing members' interests and affiliations, proceedings of meetings, and reasons for licensing decisions. Consultation means gathering input from the general public, media advocates, and practitioners on all aspects of the licensing process.

Create licensing processes that build sustainability

Community radio licensing processes can make or break community radio stations. Enabling licensing processes should include the following principles:

- Fair and equitable distribution of frequencies between public service, commercial, and community broadcasters. Legislation should reserve a portion of the radio frequency spectrum for nonprofit community broadcasting.
- Minimal or no license fees. In Mali and Colombia, the license fee for community radio stations is the equivalent of approximately US\$20. In Bolivia, community stations pay 10% of what commercial stations pay. By contrast, in Ghana, stations must pay an application fee of US\$100, a license fee of US\$2,000 and an annual fee of US\$800. High fees dramatically limit the spread of community stations.
- Licensing processes for community radio should be fair, open, transparent, and specified clearly in law from the start. In South Africa, the Independent Broadcasting Authority began issuing community broadcasting licenses in 1995, but clarified the regulatory framework only in 1997. For two years, community stations operated in uncertainty and under temporary licenses. Listeners and advertisers could not depend on community stations during this period, a situation that has had lasting impact on attitudes towards community radio and on long-term sustainability.
- Criteria for licensing should hinge on the core defining principles of community ownership, participatory practice, and nonprofit status.
- Some countries also ban ownership by political parties in order to prevent stations from becoming the mouthpiece of a particular party. In South Africa, officials of political parties may not be elected to community media governance structures.
- The least-invasive technical limitations should be applied; restrictions on coverage area, antenna height, or transmission power are not recommended.
- The regulatory agency should have sufficient capacity to handle community radio applications. Poor resourcing of South Africa's Independent Broadcasting Authority led to long delays in licensing, and many community radio initiatives foundered and collapsed while waiting.
- Broadcast regulators should set up a special community radio support office or officers within the licensing agency dedicated to assisting community radio stations. This works well in Colombia, the United Kingdom, and South Africa.
- Licenses should give stations time to operate and to prove themselves. Five-year renewable licenses are the standard in places where community radio stations are becoming sustainable.

Focus on social gain

If a key aim of community media is to develop and empower communities, legislation should reflect these values. Clear criteria will play an important role in protecting stations from pressures such as commercialism, authoritarian control, or co-option by nonrepresentative bodies. For example, if one of the aims of community radio is to build multilingualism and to represent marginalized groups, policies should be written to encourage this kind of content. Indian legislation requires 50% of content to be locally originated. Australian legislation includes strong support for indigenous broadcasting.

To reinforce the participatory aspects of stations, South African legislation encourages community participation in the planning stages of stations and in governance, management, and production of programs once the station is on the air. In the United Kingdom, the application process focuses on community service plans.

Applicants must provide evidence of social gain and/or public service broadcasting; not-for-profit status; accessibility for people living within the proposed broadcast area; training and community participation; and engagement with disadvantaged and underserved people and communities.

Address financial sustainability

The question of whether governments should directly or indirectly finance community media is controversial. In some places, direct state support would dramatically reduce independence or create the perception that the media are the voice of government. However, most policies that encourage long-term sustainability are those that also include some form of indirect financial support.

When there is government support, in order to ensure independence, it should be administered through an independent public body, separate from the regulatory agency or any government ministry. The body should include both government and civil society representation.

Examples of financing include:

- A community radio fund paid into by the state (such as in Hungary or the United Kingdom, for example; in South Africa, the fund also includes support from the media industry and donors).
- A tax on cable or telecommunication operators (Colombia).
- A percentage of license fees from commercial stations (Denmark).
- A percentage of advertising revenue from commercial stations (France).
- Indirect public funding in the form of support for employment, skills development, and lifelong learning, social inclusion programs, cultural programs, youth programs, or neighborhood regeneration support (South

Africa and the United Kingdom, for example).

- Support from local councils, local community funds, or regional bodies.⁴

There are also examples of state money earmarked for expenditures beyond basic operational costs. For example, Ireland provides funding for station research and development, such as station evaluations, listener surveys, and audience studies. Dutch law provides funding to help support a community media association. The Venezuelan, Bolivian, and Colombian governments make funds available to support training, equipment purchases, and/or provide indirect funding such as fee and tax waivers. Bangladesh has also set aside funds for training, technical support, and research and development.

Encourage mixed models of funding

A review of best practices around the world finds that the most sustainable community radio sectors are those that encourage mixed models of financing, so that no one entity can claim “ownership” of the station. In many cases, there is a cap of 50% on any single form of revenue, such as in the United Kingdom, where the policy was set up to ensure stations are not “captured” by any single financial interest (commercial, government, foundation, and so on) and rely on multiple funding sources. This option might make sense only in countries where policy provides for additional means of funding. Yet there are still some who are unhappy with this kind of policy. For example, London’s Desi Radio is frustrated by the 50% cap, because they would have no trouble securing more advertising revenue than the regulation allows.

Mixed funding models create opportunities for community media to balance

their funding sources, and may include a combination of:

- State-generated financing distributed through an independent body.
- Commercial revenue and sponsorship.
- Community-led fundraising and local forms of support, including fundraising events, fees for services, listener contributions, merchandise sales, and the like. Many stations also raise funds through very modest fees for things like on-air dedications or announcements as a way to encourage listeners to contribute even small amounts.
- Foundation support from international, national, or local NGOs and funders.

Through regulation, governments can also provide other incentives for community media development and relieve some of their economic burden, such as concessions on rates for public utilities like electricity and water; free or reduced Internet and telephone connectivity fees; access to solar or wind power; tax-exempt status as nonprofit organizations; exemptions from sales tax and import duties on equipment purchased abroad; access to low-cost satellite and mobile phone services; access to training programs; employee benefits; and many others.

Limit restrictions on content

Policies vary widely on this topic, but the most sustainable sectors are those with minimal interference from government with regard to content. However, it is also not unusual to find requirements that a percentage of programming must be locally produced or originated.

Engage in digital debates now

The growth of digital radio provides both new opportunities and new challenges for community media. Though

there are few places in the world where the switch from analog radio is on the immediate horizon, there are decisions and debates taking place that will have a major impact on the future of community radio.

So far, most of these discussions are being led by industry interests rather than consumer needs. Questions include: What will the new platforms for delivery be? What will happen to analog radio in the longer term? Who

are the new gatekeepers to accessing the airwaves (such as multiplex operators)? Will there be legal safeguards for community radio access?

Opportunities in the digital transition

Rural community radio in Mali

Mali is a large, sparsely populated country with a thriving rural community radio sector serving a large majority of the rural population in local languages. Mali has tried different ways of introducing Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) into rural areas, including rural telephony, the Internet, and sound and television broadcasting. Of all of these attempts, the greatest impact both socially and economically has been through the establishment of local rural radio stations.

As in most West African countries, broadcasting in Mali has traditionally been a state monopoly, with the ORTM (*Office de Radiodiffusion au Television de Mali*) broadcasting primarily French-language programming produced in Bamako to the entire country.

The country's first independent radio station was established in 1988 in the remote community of Kayes as a product of a presidential decree. Start-up financing for Kayes Rural Radio came from an Italian NGO, but over time, the station has been sustained through local community support and a strong relationship with Malian expatriates living in France, who regarded radio as a vehicle for their own communication with the community.

Following the introduction of multiparty democracy in 1991, Mali formally allowed the operation of private radio and television stations, and adopted one of the most democratic broadcast laws in Africa. Within a few years, dozens of private radio stations, both commercial and community-oriented, were established, most of them local stations.

Mali now has one of the strongest and most diverse radio systems in Africa. Fifteen years ago, the ORTM broadcast its programming via repeater transmitters across the country. Now there are as many as 300 radio stations broadcasting local programming throughout the country in more than a dozen local languages.

One reason for the sector's growth has been the absence of bureaucratic and financial hurdles to procuring a license. If an individual or community has the funds for equipment, they can start and operate a station. There are no license fees to establish a radio station. The only requirements are that the applicant must be a citizen of Mali, and must fill in a form requesting a frequency and explaining the technical integrity of the application. If the proposal is technically sound, and the requested frequency is available, the radio station is granted a license to use that frequency. Otherwise, a new frequency is allocated. Each year, a frequency allowance of about US\$20 is paid by each radio station.

URTEL (*l'Union des Radios et Télévisions Libres du Mali*) is an organization that offers training and advocacy services to its 168 member stations throughout the country, including 121 community stations, 38 commercial stations, and 9 religious ones. URTEL also offers advice to new stations; for example, it recommends a suggested package of studio and transmission equipment for a 250-watt station that costs approximately US\$11,000.

Many of Mali's stations have received support from donor agencies, but today, most of them are self-sufficient. Even though the stations have received external support, local people have been involved at all stages. In many cases, the villagers themselves constructed the stations' buildings. Management is overseen by boards of directors and committees elected by the communities. Staff members are hired locally, and women are actively involved at all levels.

Language is an important issue in Mali. Although French is the official language, many people, especially in rural areas, do not speak French. In 2004, some 90% of the radio stations in Mali broadcast in local languages.

Success factors and ongoing challenges

The success of rural radio can be explained by the accessibility of the medium; illiterate or preliterate, much of the population can listen to broadcasts in their own language. In an area of very high illiteracy, only oral means can ensure effective communication. Local stations have largely met the challenge of language barriers. On many stations, programs are broadcast not in Mali's official language (French) or in the widely spoken language (Bamana), but rather in the local language of that specific small area. The government's deliberate policy to encourage the emergence of local broadcasters has also been important, especially in minimizing financial and bureaucratic hurdles.

However, there are shortcomings of the community radio movement in Mali. For example, many of the radio broadcasters lack professional expertise. Also, many stations make do with archaic technical equipment, which constitutes a significant threat to sustainability, as they do not have the funds for replacement parts. Although Mali has over 300 community radios, a number are struggling (financially).

include greater frequency availability—the so-called “digital dividend.” But without public service obligations in place, there are no guarantees that this new airspace will result in greater opportunities for community media. Debates about the future of broadcast media as it moves into a digital era should include the needs and interests of local communities and small-scale, not-for-profit media for a truly pluralistic media environment to flourish. This issue might seem far removed from the immediate needs of community media in large parts of the world, but AMARC has begun to tackle it at the regional level, in Europe, Latin America, and Africa.

Develop the political will

When participatory, community-oriented practices are not granted distinctive recognition or are left to the commercial sector to provide, they tend to not last over time. Policy best practices include: recognition of community media as a formal “third sector” alongside commercial and public service media; regulations and criteria that ensure that participatory, open, and community-driven media emerge; mixed models of funding that include some form of ongoing and renewable government subsidy; flexibility that allows for communities to self-identify and define their own area of service coverage; recognition of the social gain and value that community media can provide; and support for research, impact measurement, and audience studies to improve community service.

The creation of an enabling environment requires the political will to support sustainable community media.

Key requirements for an enabling environment

- Community broadcasting should be recognized in law as a distinct type of broadcasting to be supported and encouraged through specific and explicit licensing arrangements that guarantee fair and equitable access to radio spectrum for civil-society and community-based organizations.
- Community broadcasting can be defined as independent broadcasting that is provided by and for the members of a community in a particular geographical location or that belongs to a particular community of interest. Its primary purpose is to deliver social benefit and not to operate for private commercial profit. It should be owned by and accountable to the community that it seeks to serve and it should provide for participation by the community at all levels.
- Licensing processes for community broadcasting should be fair, open, transparent, and set out in law and should be under the responsibility of an independent licensing body. Criteria for application and selection should be established openly and in consultation with civil society.
- License terms and conditions for community broadcasting should be consistent with the objectives of broadcast regulation and be designed to ensure that the community broadcasting service characteristics are protected and maintained for the duration of the license period.
- Community broadcasting services should have access to a diversity of funding sources according to local circumstances.
- Community broadcasting may be supported by public funding, including direct public subsidies. Where there is a regular and guaranteed system of public funding, this should be fair, open, and transparent in its administration and under the responsibility of an independent public body.

— Excerpt from *Broadcasting, Voice, and Accountability*, by Steve Buckley, Krisztina Duer, and Toby Mendel, with Monroe Price and Marc Raboy, published by the World Bank Institute in 2008.

Duer, Toby Mendel, with Monroe Price and Marc Raboy, published by the World Bank Institute in 2008, and the ICT Regulation Toolkit, found online at www.ictregulation-toolkit.org.

- 2 Many of the best practices listed here are drawn from Buckley, Steve, Krisztina Duer, and Toby Mendel, with Monroe Price, and Marc Raboy, (2008), *Broadcasting, Voice, and Accountability*, published by the World Bank Institute, Washington.
- 3 Pringle, Ian and Bikram Subba. (2007). *Ten Years On: The State of Community Radio in Nepal*. UNESCO. portal.unesco.org/geography/en/files/7991/11966615215State_of_Community_Radio_in_Nepal_abridged.pdf/State+of+Community+Radio+in+Nepal_abridged.pdf
- 4 Even in Sweden, it has been argued that community radio would not be possible without

some support from local or county government. For examples of local government support in London, see Lewis, Peter M., (2008), “Finding and Funding Voices: The London Experience,” available online at www.londonmet.ac.uk/londonmet/library/s16011_3.pdf.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Coyer’s article draws extensively on two particularly useful sources: *Broadcasting, Voice and Accountability*, by Steve Buckley, Krisztina

Related documents and websites

- AMARC Africa country reports, available online at www.africa.amarc.org/index.php?p=Community_Radio_in_Africa
- Buckley, Steve, Kriztina Duer, Toby Mendel, with Monroe Price and Marc Raboy. (2008). *Broadcasting, Voice, and Accountability*. (World Bank Institute, Washington.) <http://www.digitalculture.org/broadcasting.html>
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Legislating advertising revenue

The question of how much—and whether—community stations should be allowed to support themselves through advertising is an area that sparks heated debate. In some places, there is broad opposition from the commercial broadcast sector to any kind of commercial revenue for community stations. However, this opposition is not supported by any evidence that the development of successful of community radio stations has resulted in significant loss of revenue for commercial broadcasters.

In some countries such as the United States, Chile, Mexico, and Brazil, there are government restrictions on community radio advertising. Restrictions include either all-out bans, limits that allow for on-air sponsorship (underwriting) but not actual commercials, or limits on the content of advertising, such as bans on political party advertisements, or allowing advertising from local companies only.

Restrictions like these may make sense in the United States, where broadcasting is dominated by commercial rather than public media and where community stations have access to funding from the general public. In most parts of the world, however, it is generally accepted that community radio cannot sustain itself without access to some form of advertising and commercial revenue. Without access to commercial sources of income, stations can become too dependent on international donors. Donor funding is not necessarily guaranteed each year, and reliance on donor funding does not promote long-term financial independence. This concern has been raised regarding India's policy, where stations are allowed to carry up to five minutes of advertising per hour, but no program sponsorship is allowed unless that sponsor is the government, and there is no central source of funding for stations.

Policies. Central European University, Budapest.

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- Stevenson, John Harris. (2006). "Community Radio Support in Other Jurisdictions," report for National Campus and Community Radio Association. www.tranquileye.com/free/comment/reply/131
- See also the websites for national regulatory agencies, and advocacy groups for community media, such as AMARC (www.amarc.org) and the Community Media Forum Europe (www.cmfe.eu)
- A number of European community media policy reports, articles and resources are available online at www.communitymedia.eu

Community Research for Community Media Sustainability

BY BIRGITTE JALLOV

Audience research that produces credible results can be expensive, hard to manage, and difficult to analyze. Such research may seem well beyond the means and capacity of a community radio station in a poor, rural or peri-urban area. However, audience research is essential, because it forms the basis for planning, effective implementation, and understanding impact. **Birgitte Jallo** discusses some of the creative and cost-effective ideas that community media have come up with for doing audience.

All community media organizations struggle to do research, but all need it to become sustainable. Research can be used to confirm that community media are properly anchored in the community, and it can ensure that the media outlet serves all groups in the community. Research results are the strongest basis for strategic planning and making decisions. Research enables community media to understand their audience and to inform others about their audience and their impact.

Most of this article focuses on community radio. However, community radio shares its central features of community ownership, participation, and not-for-profit business model with other community media forms, such as community newspapers, multimedia groups, telecenters, and television. Obviously, the specifics of research design and method will vary for different kinds of media, but the same overall principles about the need for credible, cost-effective research on key points apply.

There are many reasons to conduct research. The two main ones are:

- To build and improve the organization
- To demonstrate impact to community media users, practitioners, and funders—potential funders, as well as paying partners, like program sponsors and advertisers

Who conducts research?

Research can be conducted by community radio station staff and volunteers, and incorporated into the daily life of the station. Community radio stations are by definition developmental and participatory. Community-based research methods are therefore recommended, as an extension of the station's activities. Community-based research has the following qualities:

Participatory: It involves community radio managers and broadcasters. The benefits are that the research starts from a strong base of insight into the community; the station builds research capacity and broadcasters become better known in the community.

Regular: It ensures a steady flow of information and feedback for the station and its partners, and maintains a certain level of research capacity.

Transparent: As with all research, if the methodology is explained, the results are more likely to be trusted.

Simple: Straightforward questions generate straightforward answers that are easier to interpret.

At what stages is research needed?

To become sustainable, the community radio station needs a clear plan and the capacity to identify, manage, and main-

tain partnerships. Research is needed at all stages of community radio development and operations. The research design and data gathered will depend on the current stage of development and what kind of information is needed.

Stage 1: Early development

Research is used to find out about local development needs, whether community radio is the right medium, or if there are alternatives to community radio. Research will:

- Clarify legal issues relating to setting up a radio station.
- “Map” the community to ensure that all groups and organizations are involved.
- Identify the aspirations of the community, and of groups within the community.
- Identify the community's information and communication needs. Which of these can be met by a community radio station? Which will require other types of community development intervention?
- Assess feasibility—is a community radio station a feasible (and viable) option?

Research methods at this stage include community mapping and simple data collection exercises. The community is involved throughout the process, which

takes place in facilitated workshops and meetings.

Stage 2: Strategic planning

Information gathered during Stage 1 is drawn into a community-led strategic planning process. The strategic planning process identifies the steps that the station must take in order to realize the community's development vision.

The focus of planning will be social [sustainability](#), resulting from community ownership; institutional sustainability, resulting from a participatory organizational development process; and financial sustainability.

The Mozambican community radio development process uses Lisa Cannon's definition of sustainability:

“The ability of an organization to secure and manage sufficient resources to enable it to fulfill its mission effectively and consistently over time without excessive dependence on any single funding source. . . . Sustainable organizations have, at minimum, a clear mission and strategic direction; the skills to attract resources from a variety of local, national, and international sources; and the know-how to manage them efficiently.”¹

In this conception, partnerships with many different groups within a community and from outside the community are central to sustainability. Community ownership is generated by ensuring that all interest groups and organizations are involved, as partners, in development of the station. It is important to include all localities, religions, age groups, genders, and socioeconomic groups.

The main research issues will be:

- How to establish a sustainable organizational structure that is also inclusive and transparent

- How to ensure that all interest groups are continually involved
- How to structure volunteer teams to meet programming needs
- How to develop a programming format, structure, and style that is true to local culture, history, situation, and needs
- How to identify the necessary equipment
- How to plan for (preventive) maintenance of equipment
- What kind of ongoing training will be needed
- What kind of ongoing impact assessment will be needed

Stage 3: Impact assessment

There are many ways of doing impact research, yet in day-to-day operations it is often considered a low priority. Impact assessment is important, so that the organization can:

- Report to presenters and producers on the effectiveness of programming. Are the target audiences happy with the programs? Are the programs fulfilling community interests and expectations? Are they interesting and accessible?
- Report to listeners about the station's performance. Is the community happy with the station as a whole?
- Report to partners about the effectiveness and impact of messages.
- Demonstrate to future funding partners that the station is making an impact and is able to document impact in quantitative and qualitative terms.

How do you do cost-effective impact research? A group of eight community radio stations in Mozambique came up with and implemented some creative ideas.²

The methods assess impact at three levels: (i) internal governance and

functioning; (ii) community satisfaction with programming content; and (iii) social change/impact in the community. Research methods include the following:

- **Regularly hearing out the community:** Every time program makers and presenters went out into the community to gather material, they would informally interview people to find out their views about the station and its programs.
- **Registration of callers' details and opinions:** A set of basic questions were placed next to the station's telephone, and whenever someone called, the producer would conduct a short interview. This technique enabled the station to establish the profile of callers (gender, age, address, etc.) and to record their opinions about the station. They would also ask questions about changes in the community that might be attributed to the station's work.
- **Registration and analysis of listeners' letters:** Listeners' letters provided considerable unsolicited feedback about programming. Listeners would also write to the station to complain about inadequate public services, providing the station with information about issues and needs, and the opportunity to act as an intermediary between the community and local authorities.
- **Questions on the back of message slips:** An important function of radio stations in Mozambique is to broadcast listeners' messages. Messages are also an important way for the station to generate income. The listener buys a printed message slip on which s/he writes the message, the sender's name, the preferred broadcast time, and any other important information. On the back of the slip are survey questions about the station to elicit opinions and other feedback. Answers were collated and categorized as they came in.

DOING A “BAREFOOT” IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Area of assessment

Ensuring that the radio works effectively as an institution and that all groups within the community are involved (twice yearly)

What to do

Use a checklist:

1. Staff: any vacancies? Are responsibilities clear? How long have people been involved? What training has been received?
2. Volunteer structure: how many? Duration of involvement? Training received?
3. Work/action plans: do they exist? Are they used? Status of budgets, accounts, schedules?
4. Programs: content variation, relevance, local production, source of content?
5. Community involvement and participation: who comes to meetings? Who doesn't?
6. Sustainability: status of partnerships? Fund-raising initiatives?
7. Satisfaction: of staff, volunteers, and community members?

The impact of community radio content (ongoing assessment)

1. Conduct informal interviews while out preparing programs or doing other radio work
2. Register opinions of listeners who call in
3. Register and analyze letters received from listeners
4. Register and analyze responses to questions printed on the back of returned message slips (used to announce births, deaths, community events, meetings, and the like)
5. Conduct interviews with people living near individual programmers
6. Conduct interviews with people during major public events

The impact of radio on community development (ongoing and annual assessments)

1. Conduct individual interviews
2. Conduct focus group interviews (distinct profiles, such as young women, young men, women in rural areas, men in rural areas, women in town-like areas, men in town-like areas), with 6–10 people per group
3. Keep identified problems at the forefront of organization and planning (in Mozambique identified problems include: food security, health, and security and infrastructure)

- **Interviews with people living near individual programmers:** The eight radio stations that were part of the Mozambique development program had community programmers living in all different areas of the communities served. Stations generally had high numbers of volunteers—as high as 50. Each volunteer would carry out about six interviews, giving the station a large set of results from all parts of the community. This method was successfully used in a community where a person living with HIV/AIDS was interviewed on radio for the first time. The next day, 50 volunteers carried out interviews about the program in their areas, and the station had instantly taken the pulse of the community.

- **Interviewing people attending public events:** In Mozambique, public events draw large crowds nearly every month. The subject of interviews was generally the same as that of the public event. For example, on Women's Day, the interviews would primarily focus on women's programming.

All of these methods are simple, yet can be planned in advance and carried out in a structured and rigorous way. The first time that research processes like these are developed and conducted, it is useful to engage a facilitator or trainer to work with the station's staff and volunteers, to help draft interview schedules, and to compile and analyze data. However, the facilitation role can be taken over by a volunteer—perhaps a local teacher—as time goes by.

The research is extremely cost-effective and can be incorporated into the everyday life of the station. The main costs will be facilitation; transportation; and the purchase of, installation of, and training on computer software like Microsoft Excel—and perhaps a festive lunch for volunteers.

Community media will also benefit from the following three impact assessment methods that are more cost-effective, yet rigorous.

Most significant change

Most Significant Change is a story-based impact assessment tool, systematized by Rick Davies and Jessica Dart (2005),³ which builds on oral traditions, and is especially useful in communities in which literacy levels are low.

The method is relatively easy for community groups to use. When using it for impact assessment, the most important question is: What is the most significant change that has taken place in your life—or in the life of the community—since the community radio station started?

Simple, structured interviews with carefully identified interest groups will register a series of “significant changes.” The changes are categorized and grouped, and at meetings, community members are asked rank changes from the most to the least significant, through voting. In this way, the community decides which changes are most significant.

For further information about the Most Significant Change method, see the Communications for Social Change Consortium publication, “Who measures change? An Introduction to Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation of Communication for Social Change.”⁴

Information and communication needs assessment

This is an effective way of identifying communities’ usual communications channels, and determining unmet communication and information needs. The method is particularly useful during the early planning stages of a radio station, and for ongoing planning once the station is on the air. The method helps strengthen the station’s role in informa-

tion provision, its ability to act as the voice of the community, and its role in encouraging debate and dialogue.⁵

Barefoot impact assessment

See the box titled [Doing a “barefoot” impact assessment](#), which includes a summary of the method.⁶

ENDNOTES

- 1 Cannon, Lisa. (1999). *Life beyond aid: Twenty strategies to help make NGOs sustainable*. Johannesburg: Initiative for Participatory Development.
- 2 The methods were identified and tested by the sociologist Nelia Taimo as part of a media development project run by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization/United Nations Development Program (UNESCO/UNDP).
- 3 See www.mande.co.uk/docs/MSCGuide.htm.
- 4 See www.communicationforsocialchange.org/pdf/who_measures_change.pdf.
- 5 The method is presented in www.undp.org/governance/docs/A2I_guides_communication-forempowerment.pdf.
- 6 The method was conceptualized, tested, and implemented by the UNESCO/UNDP Media Development Project in Mozambique in 1998–2006 under Birgitte Jallo’s leadership. The checklist was created by id21 Insights for their newsletter, www.id21.org/insights/insights58/art07.html, and is based on an article by Birgitte Jallo: www.comminit.com/en/node/71540/307.

The Business of Changing Lives

In this section, we include detailed studies of community media. The studies have been chosen from a pool of examples put forward by the advisory committee and other contributors to the guide. In making the final selection, our intention was to cover different contexts, countries and kinds of media. Most of all, the studies aim to highlight the challenges community media face as they struggle to become sustainable.

Wherever possible, researchers conducted site visits and, using an open-ended question guide, interviewed practitioners. Primary research was supplemented with desk research, including books, documents and the Internet. We have presented most of the studies in narrative style, and include descriptions about the look and feel of projects visited—which are important indicators of sustainability—and information about their structures and business models.

We begin with six studies of community radio stations. The experience of [Radio Izuba](#) in Rwanda highlights the interconnectedness of social, institutional and financial sustainability. The station's experience demonstrates how institutional weaknesses—inadequate financial systems; an inability to maintain partnerships—undermined the station's income generating potential and made it vulnerable to political control. Independence—or audience perception of independence—is highly prized in Rwanda's controlled media environment, and the station is concerned that loss of independence will mean loss of listeners.

[Jozi FM](#), which broadcasts to the vast city of Soweto in South Africa, is clearly financially sustainable, but listeners are not happy with programming and management, and protesters have marched to the station gates demanding greater community accountability. In contrast, [Radio Vwa Peyisan Abriko](#), in Haiti,

and [Radio Gbafth](#) in Sierra Leone are as poor as their listeners, but have strong social support, and can depend on volunteers to survive. Similarly, [Radio Madanpokhara](#) in Nepal has been able to rely on community buy-in. [Desi Radio](#), in London in the United Kingdom, thrives through a mixed business model, including advertising, hiring out volunteers to dance at weddings, gifts, and grant support for a media training program.

The [Coffee Lifeline](#) project in Rwanda demonstrates the value of partnerships in sustaining high-quality program content, in this case, agricultural information for coffee farmers. Program sponsorship is an important source of income for radio stations everywhere, and particularly in developing countries, where government departments, non-governmental organizations and donors are increasingly recognizing the value of distributing education and development messages through media that are close to communities, and which are sensitive to local cultures and broadcast in local languages and dialects. The experience of [Media for Development](#), in London, points to the potential of taking a more commercial approach to building sustainable community media.

We discuss networks in three parts of the world: the [United States](#), [Afghanistan](#) and [Latin America](#). The Latin American and Afghan examples demonstrate the variety of ways in which networks contribute to sustainability of both individual community media out-

lets and whole community media sectors, through sharing information and making programs, training, and marketing and selling airtime. In addition to other sources of income, the Latin American and Afghan networks rely on donors for support. National Public Radio (NPR) in the United States also relies to a large degree on grant support—in this case, government grants to member stations to enable them to buy NPR programs.

Community media everywhere are turning to the Internet to seek new opportunities to reach and connect people, and to extend their audiences. Many community radio stations now claim international audiences and generate income through offering communications services to Diaspora communities. Online community media as a format in their own right are on the rise in the developed world, where computers and the Internet are increasingly being used as a source of news, information, education and entertainment. We include a study of [online newspapers](#) in the United States, which draws useful distinctions between online community media and big, international social networking and blogging sites. The study also shows how online community media face many of the same challenges of community media everywhere—financial sustainability, volunteer fatigue, lack of capacity, and the like.

We've argued that sustainability is not just about money—even financial sustainability is not just about money—but about deciding what are the right resources at the right time, and engaging in activities to secure and manage them, without compromising community service and community development. As the studies show, sustainability cannot be an exact science. For external support agencies, community media can be frustrating and difficult to work with (and vice versa), but community media have shown that it is worth staying the course.

Work with What You Have

BY BERNICE ROBERTSON

Radio Vwa Peyizan Abriko 102.7FM (RVPA) in Haiti is a typical community radio station. It was set up and owned by a community association and provides a vital community service and is staffed by volunteers. When RVPA lost its studio some years ago, the station's volunteers set up operations at the side of the road, inspiring community members to bring cash contributions and in kind to build new premises for the station. RVPA has made community support and participation the core of its financial sustainability plan.

Just off the newly paved main road that leads to the town of Abri-cots, or the Village, as residents call it, the studio of Radio Vwa Peyizan Abriko 102.7 FM (RVPA) is announced on a simple panel board. Lined with trees and plants, the path that leads us towards the tiny concrete

building ahead ends at a terrace framed by cheerful flowers that echo the smiles on the eight faces who welcome us. Banners and posters at the door support a vaccination campaign taking place in the Abricots community. The door opens into a single room that is separated by partial walls into

a reception area, the broadcast studio, and a tiny storage area. Space is limited, but everything has a place: the books are neatly stacked; the CDs ordered; the files arranged. Brightly colored posters on the walls publicize campaigns and events and provide a cheerful background that is enhanced by the tropical music on the radio. A copy of the day's program schedule hangs at eye level next to the studio operator's chair. The sense of order, organization, and tidiness brings to mind the Haitian saying "*Fè avek*": work with what you have.

Abricots, a commune of the department (province) of Grand Anse, is 25

kilometers from Jérémie, the provincial capital. Located in an isolated region of Haiti, Abricots was not reached by any Haitian radio until the late 1990s, when the Taino Cultural Movement for Development (MOCTAD), a local nonprofit community association, spotted the opportunity. On November 28, 1998, MOCTAD launched RVPA, the first—and 10 years later, still the only—radio station in the commune.

Hurricane warnings launch the station

The department of Grand Anse is frequently hit by seasonal storms and hurricanes and the people of Abricots, ignorant of storm warnings, have suffered fatalities, injuries, and material loss. RVPA's debut broadcasts were weather warnings. Their next priority was the promotion of local arts and crafts, interests that are gaining momentum in the commune.

The mission of the radio station is to bring about change, moving toward sustainable human development by keeping the population informed. Today, RVPA's programming is varied and includes education, local government news and information, health, culture, religion, children's programs, women's affairs, human rights, environmental affairs, and music. The station generates its own local news bulletins, but national and international news bulletins come from a larger radio station via telephone. The presenter telephones someone in the city, who holds the phone next to a radio receiver, relaying



Radio Vwa Peyizan Abriko supports a vaccination campaign targeting the residents of the commune.

the news to the people of Abricots.

The station is on the air 82 hours every week; if they had more energy to power the equipment and transmitter, this number would be increased. Energy is mainly provided by a solar panel, which is affordable, and occasionally by a fuel generator, which is expensive.

Radio is a crucial source of information for the vast majority of people in Haiti, where access to the press is limited by low literacy rates. Television remains expensive and does not reach all parts of Haiti, because of the mountains. There are hundreds of radio stations in Haiti. Because many operate without licenses, it is difficult to say exactly how many stations there are, and the estimated number varies between 250 and 400, depending on whom you ask.

Community radio is not recognized by law in Haiti, where the three legal categories are commercial, religious/cultural stations, and government radio. Some stations, like RVPA, brand themselves as community radio and embrace the community radio principles of community ownership, community participation, and community service.

Haiti has a community media association, RAMAK (in Creole: *Rasanbleman Medya pou Aksyon Kominoté*, translated as Media Gathering for Community Action). RAMAK's 41 member stations are community-oriented, although some are registered as commercial stations, others as religious or cultural stations. RAMAK's member stations are dispersed across Haiti. Some are quite close together and sometimes compete with each other, particularly during election time, when they might side with different candidates. About half of their programming is music; the rest is devoted to talk shows, debates, news, education, and cultural programming. All of RAMAK's members have committed to improving their quality of



Radio Abriko's director, Kechner Toussaint

journalism and programming through a capacity-building program supported by Internews Network (United States) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

Listeners are the voice of the radio

RVPA's success arises out of community engagement, says its director Kechner Toussaint. "Listeners are the voice of the radio. *Les paysans écoutent leur propre voix par radio*. The peasants hear their own voices on the radio. The radio plays a role in all commune development activities and local problems are debated on air, ensuring that City Hall hears what citizens have to say."

Despite pressure, RVPA has remained politically neutral. Director Toussaint recalled the station's role in putting the two front-runners for the mayoral race for Abricots in 2006 in touch with the community through debates and call-in programs. The debates appeared to result in less rivalry between the candidates, and a greater focus on the community in the mayoral election campaign. The winning mayoral candidate appointed the other candidate as Director of City Hall.

Financially, the station faces many dilemmas, confronting the same daily struggle to survive as its listeners. Haiti is the least-developed country in the Americas. The World Bank put Haiti's per capita income in 2006 at US\$480,

placing it 152 out of 178 countries. An estimated 66% of Haiti's 8.7 million people work in agriculture, mostly in subsistence farming. Just under half of the population cannot read or write.

The official website of the commune of Abricots website (www.myabricots.com) says that Abricots has 25,000 inhabitants. There are about 9,000 pupils registered at some 60 schools in the commune, only three of which are secondary schools. Agriculture and fishing are the main occupations of the commune. City Hall labels three-quarters of the population as "unemployed" because they do not have a fixed and continuous income.

Decisions are taken by the team

The station's approach to management and governance is simple. There are 17 members of the radio team, all volunteers, who rotate through the current programs. Each programming area is headed by a coordinator, who reports to the management coordinator or station director. Decisions are made by the team.

Financial management is equally simple. The station records income and expenditure in an accounting book, which is maintained by the management coordinator or director.

Surviving on community contributions

Despite their poverty, the community gives generously, and their contributions form RVPA's main source of income. RVPA organizes listeners into fan clubs. There are about 200 fan clubs, with membership numbers ranging from 10 to 50 people (mostly youths). They meet regularly, confirming their commitment to the community and supporting the station financially in a way that takes the cliché out of the popular phrase "radio for the people, by the people."

RVPA staff recall its toughest crisis: just after the station was launched, the building became unavailable. Determined to stay on the air and avoid interruption of their service, RVPA set up its studio at the side of the road. Community members stepped in with cash and volunteered time for construction of the current premises.

Station director Toussaint proudly informed us that the station receives contributions even from Abricots natives—former fan club members—who now live outside of the commune. A former resident who now lives in Port-au-Prince sends the station CDs. The community also provides technical support; for example, the station’s generator is maintained free of charge by an experienced engineer from Abricots.

“What you can afford, when you can afford it”

Fan club contributions are not predetermined. Members provide what they can afford when they can afford it. The same principle applies to community members wanting to advertise. The station does not have fixed rates. Instead, community members are invited to pay what they can—and contributions often exceed expectations. Although death announcements are often used as a source of radio income in other parts of the country, RVPA provides the service free of charge. This is just one of the ways in which RVPA gives something back to the community.

RVPA believes that international organizations that receive funding for a development or human rights project should pay for advertising their services. But this income is not always easy to come by, as some organizations say that RVPA is a community station and so should carry their advertisements for free. For commercial advertisements, RVPA does not have a list of rates, and rates are negotiated on a case-by-case

basis. The difficulty of this approach is that revenue is unpredictable.

Another source of income—also irregular—is from the local *Fondation Paradis des Indiens* (Indian Paradise Foundation), which grows, dries, and preserves fruit and which advertises its products over the radio. But revenue from this client is seasonal, and occurs only when harvests and sales are good. Overall, however, the partnership is productive, and an additional benefit for RVPA is access to the *Fondation’s* Internet service.

For 2008, RVPA projected income of 249,000 Haitian gourdes (about US\$6,470) and expenditure of 243,000 Haitian gourdes (about US\$6,314). However, the team says that reality is quite different, particularly when it comes to income, which is far lower. To compensate, team members pay for the station’s needs from their own pockets and are reimbursed if and when money comes in. The only other sources of income are two annual fundraisers. A music festival with local musicians is held on January 2 and an RVPA anniversary event is organized on November 28.

The station’s biggest programming expense is the distance-learning program, which is headed by a paid expert. The program teaches reading and comprehension and mathematics; its listeners include adults and children. RVPA reports that according to teachers, students’ exam results have improved since the program started.

Future plans: expand, diversify, and survive

At present, RVPA does not cover the whole commune, and the staff hopes to soon increase its technical capacity to do this. There are also plans to start up a cybercafé, and a store selling crafts and clothing. RVPA hopes to raise funds for these projects through the assistance of the municipal government and community fundraising.

The station has collaborated with the municipality to create a website for the commune, and the municipality has said that if RVPA can get connected, they will provide computers for the cybercafé. RVPA has a spot on the municipality’s website that markets its programming—further evidence of the station’s good relationship with City Hall and of its value to the commune.

For now, RVPA survives through the generosity of its fans and community members, the ingenuity and leadership of the director and his team, and the willingness of the team to dig into their own pockets. What does sustainability mean for RVPA? It means, team members say, ensuring that the station stays on the air in order to continue educating the community.

Bernice Robertson is an independent consultant who has worked for several years in Haiti in the areas of democratic governance and institutional strengthening.

This report is based on interviews with RVPA’s management and a visit to the station in June 2008.

Resources

Resources used in compiling this report include:

- Report on Community Radio Stations in Haiti, Internews Network Community Radio Stations Strengthening Project, March 2008
- Trip Report on Field Interviews in Grand Anse, Creative Associates International, Inc., Haiti Media Assistance and Civic Education Program, October 2004
- Haiti Media Assistance and Civic Education Program Final Report, Creative Associates International, Inc., March 2006
- Community Radio Handbook, UNESCO, 2001
- www.amarc.org
- www.myabricots.com

You Cannot Put a Price on Community Involvement

BY MANISHA ARYAL

For Radio Madanpokhara in Nepal, community support makes the station sustainable. Community support covers the annual license fee, raises operational funds, and extends listenership.

Independent media has been on the rise in Nepal since 1991, when the monarchy agreed to introduce a multiparty democracy. By 2007, more than 90 licenses had been granted to nonprofit and community radio stations. Not all have gone on the air yet, but once they are all up and running, about 70% of the population will be within reach of a community radio station.¹ Nepal became a republic in 2008 after 240 years of monarchy and about 12 years of insurgency by Maoist guerrillas aimed at ousting the monarchy.

Decades of instability and political violence have left Nepal one of the poorest countries in the world. The economy is primarily agricultural, and about 85% of the population is rural. Nepal's communications infrastructure is underdeveloped and the growing numbers of community radio stations play an important role in reaching distant, marginalized, and illiterate people, and engaging them in local and national government. In this study, **Manisha Aryal** shows how community radio stations are rising to the challenge.



Every day, Community Radio Madanpokhara receives streams of visitors.

Sustainability is not just about a revenue stream, says Gunakar Aryal, station manager of Community Radio Madanpokhara in Palpa District, West Nepal. “It is about a community’s investment in the station and their commitment to keep broadcasting despite all odds.”²

Aryal should know! Community Radio Madanpokhara, located some hundred miles outside the capital, Kathmandu, went on the air eight years ago with initial technical support from UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization),³ and 65,000 rupees (US\$835) in an endowment fund collected from the community. The station had a 100-watt transmitter, with the broadcast console at the manager’s house and a recording studio next to Aryal’s cow shed.⁴

Three years later, the station collected 507,000 rupees (US\$6,500) as a con-

tribution from organizing a reading of the Hindu scriptures and built premises with a professional recording studio. In 2004, UNESCO helped the station add on a community telecenter. The telecenter includes computers and an Internet connection, enabling Community Radio Madanpokhara to provide information and training services. Radio Madanpokhara now trains community members to use computers and the Internet, expanding their access to information. Program producers and hosts incorporate information from the Internet through radio browsing programs, in which listeners send in questions and programmers use the Internet to find answers.

Today the station has a 500-watt transmitter, broadcasts 18 hours a day, and reaches all 65 Village Development Committees (VDC) in Palpa District. The endowment fund has grown to 235,000 rupees (about US\$3,000).

Strengthening local democracy

“We need transparent local government,” says Gunakar Aryal. “And our radio fosters participation at the most local level and makes local democracy strong.”

Recognizing the importance of the radio station, the Madanpokhara VDC puts in an annual budget line item to pay for the annual license renewal fee. This helps the station meet 50% of its license renewal cost to the government. The rest of the licensing cost and the running costs come from the station’s own earnings—revenue collected from broadcasting public service announcements, local government information campaigns, and commercial advertisements (barring those for fast food, soft drinks, tobacco, and alcohol-based products, which are deemed bad for the community’s health).

“Community involvement was the key to running this station from the beginning,” says Aryal, who used to be a high school teacher. “If there is no involvement, it makes no sense to have a community radio station.”

Three other voluntary groups support the station in 36 of the 65 VDCs of Palpa District:

- Radio Sangi Samuha or Friends of Radio conducts public hearings on issues raised on radio and acts as a bridge between the station’s program staff and listeners.
- Mahila Sanchar Samuha or the Women Communicators’ Group seeks to mobilize women listeners through radio and involve them in community development.
- Radio Sahayog Samiti or Radio Support Committee is made up of local public officials and helps the station raise funds.



Station Manager Gunakar Aryal consults with Friends of Community Radio Madanpokhara.

Radio Sangi Samuha and Mahila Sanchar Samuha also help Community Radio Madanpokhara mobilize resources from within the community. They collect Musti Daan (a voluntary contribution equivalent to a handful of rice per day) for the station and have helped increase the station’s endowment fund.

Another innovative revenue generation stream is Daura Daan (a contribution set aside by the Forest Users’ Committees, which are active in Palpa). These funds also go toward the station’s operating costs.

Each of the 36 VDC where Community Radio Madanpokhara is heard selects a Radio Representative from their VDCs. Radio Madanpokhara trains these Radio Representatives in community reporting, radio production, and broadcasting. Radio Representatives attend weekly meetings with the station’s program staff, contribute news items from their VDCs, and in consultation with Radio Sangi Samuha and Mahila Sanchar Samuha, produce a monthly 30-minute program.

“This involvement is priceless,” says station manager Aryal. “No amount of money can buy a radio station this commitment. Imagine: the community or-

ganizes around radio, extends the reach of broadcast through public discussions, and contributes to news and programming. This is sustainability.” Community Radio Madanpokhara is expanding its volunteer support group and its community mobilization activities to six new VDCs each year and hopes to cover all of Palpa District by the year 2012.

Manisha Aryal, Pakistan Resident Journalism Advisor and South Asia Regional Development Officer for Internews Network, is a Nepali-born journalist based in Pakistan. Aryal works with Pakistan’s emerging independent media and trains radio and television journalists. She has worked in media development across Asia, including in Nepal, where she set up the Antenna Foundation, a nonprofit radio and television production house that works on programming and sustainability issues of Nepal’s thriving community radio sector.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Station manager Gunakar Aryal is no relation of the author of this article.
- 2 Girard, B. (2007) Empowering Radio: Good practices in development & operation of community radio: Issues important to its effectiveness. Research conducted for the Program on Civic Engagement, Empowerment & Respect for Diversity, World Bank Institute, Washington, June 2007. <http://comunica.org/radio2.0/archives/69>
- 3 UNESCO's development strategy includes supporting integration of "traditional" (like radio) and "new" technologies (Information and Communications Technologies—ICTs) in order to improve and extend access to information. They have supported development of telecenters at several radio stations in Nepal and other countries.
- 4 See the station's website at www.community-radio-madanpokhara.org.

Keeping the Money Neutral

BY RYAN HICKS

Radio Izuba in Kibongo, the capital of Rwanda’s Eastern Province, has been on the air for four years. Like many community radio stations, it started on a high note, with a start-up grant, some willing international partners, and plenty of ideas for raising funds by marketing creative programming ideas to sponsors. For the first year, everything was rosy. However, an internal crisis disrupted partnerships and plans, and today Radio Izuba is struggling to get back on track.

The key concern is that financial instability could make the station vulnerable to political influence. **Ryan Hicks** visited Radio Izuba to find out what the future may hold.

Radio Izuba 100.0FM was born from a decentralization plan for Rwanda’s Eastern Province. This was a multistakeholder plan involving national, provincial, and local government departments, nongovernmental organizations, business, and international development

In keeping with the decentralization plan, Radio Izuba’s mission is to contribute to sustainable local development. They aim to build and maintain peace so that communities can live in harmony in a democratic environment, anchored in good governance and respect for human rights.

agencies. The aim was for local citizens to have a greater say in provincial and local government.

The station broadcasts from premises in Kibongo, the capital of Eastern Province, where they have one studio and four offices. Broadcasting happens in two sessions, from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Posters of international music stars decorate the walls and the offices are equipped with desktop and laptop computers. During our visit, the atmosphere was quiet, without the excitement or buzz that one would expect in a radio station that provides news and information to a potential audience of two million people.

Radio is known to be a good vehicle for mobilizing citizens’ participation, so setting up a radio station became an important part of the decentralization plan. The U.S.-government-funded United States Agency for International

Development (USAID) supported the decentralization plan and agreed to give US\$200,000 for building a community radio station. Responding to the opportunity, community-based stakeholders set up the Association for Community Development through Communication (ADECCO) to oversee formation of the radio station, and Radio Izuba went on the air in June 2004.

Development (USAID) supported the decentralization plan and agreed to give US\$200,000 for building a community radio station. Responding to the opportunity, community-based stakeholders set up the Association for Community Development through Communication (ADECCO) to oversee formation of the radio station, and Radio Izuba went on the air in June 2004.



A volunteer presents the news at Radio Izuba.

and education, including women's issues and women's rights, agricultural, health, and youth programming.

The community owns and controls Radio Izuba through ADECCO, whose board of directors is also the station's board. ADDECO board members are nominated and elected from the ADECCO General Assembly, which comprises 54 representatives of different sectors of Eastern Province society. At their meetings, General Assembly members offer input into the station's activities and programming, and this is how the community's voice is formally heard and their needs and interests are incorporated. ADECCO is proud of its independence from political influence and its community development orientation.

Independence — an important theme

Independence is an important theme for Rwandan media. Radio in Rwanda is and will for many years be associated with Radio Milles Collines, the station that notoriously incited Hutus to murder Tutsis and moderate Hutus during the 1994 genocide. Some 800,000 people were massacred during the genocide, and the present Rwandan government argues that this history makes strict media laws necessary. As a result, Rwandan media of all kinds, including radio, are today extremely careful not to transgress laws around incitement, hate speech, and "divisiveness."¹

Rwandan media also tend to favor the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF), the movement that ousted the government that provoked the terrible events of 1994. In the most recent election (2003), President Paul Kagame was reelected with over 95% of the vote, giving the RPF enormous power and influence at all levels of government and civil society. The extent and depth of the RPF's power has bred a culture of self-



Radio Izuba's mast. The station's signal reaches most of Eastern Province, where most listeners are rural farmers. It also reaches Kigali, Rwanda's capital city.

editorial censorship among journalists, and in 2008, Reporters without Borders ranked Rwanda 145 out of 169 countries in their annual Press Freedom Index.²

In this sense, Radio Izuba is no exception to other Rwandan media, and station staff and community members perceive the station as being "soft" with regard to reporting on national and provincial government. However, the station has a proud tradition of actively challenging local government. As an example, Radio Izuba staff tells about how their journalists followed up on a story about a brutal local policeman who beat a man into a coma. After ignoring many requests for an interview, the mayor eventually answered the phone in a vulgar and unpleasant way.³ Radio Izuba aired the interview in full despite attempts by the mayor's office to stop them, and the mayor was considerably embarrassed.

Crisis: sponsors withdraw support

In addition to the USAID start-up grant, there was strong community support for Radio Izuba in its beginning. Local people provided materials, money, and labor to build the studio and offices in Kibongo. Other local partnerships developed, and the station did well.

Unfortunately, in 2006, issues regarding expenditure caused serious disagreement between the board and management. There were allegations that funds were being routed to political party projects rather than initiatives directly related to community

development, and the station was unable to justify expenditures to donors and sponsors.⁴

During the crisis, partnerships were not properly maintained, and donors and program sponsors lost interest and withdrew support. The sharp decline in income meant that staff members were not paid, and some workers left the station. Management made little effort to ensure that the sponsored program slots were continued or sustained.

In an attempt to resolve the crisis, the community intervened via the ADDECO General Assembly, which ordered an investigation. The ADDECO General Assembly also disbanded the board and replaced some senior staff members.

With renewed energy and resolve, the station is now trying to rebuild relation-

ships, but financial weakness may have made it vulnerable to political control.

Building a financial sustainability plan

The new president of the board, Solange Ayanone, says that the board is concentrating on financial sustainability. The station has stepped up efforts to increase program sponsorship, which is working. New sponsors include a mobile phone company (the United Nations agency UNIFEM, and the Ministry of Health.

According to Ayanone, income is starting to pick up, staff members are being paid, and the station is functioning more or less as it should. In 2007 income was US\$100,000, which a board member told us was a big improvement over 2005–2006.⁵ However, financial sustainability is still a major concern, and the station does not have surplus cash.

Community support remains strong. The station has 10 paid staff and 20 volunteers. There is also a team of trained news-gatherers—called *points focaux* (pupils of the eye)—who use cellphones to send in news from different parts of the province. The station pays the *points focaux* in phone credits, and sometimes pays for their transport to come to the station and make programs.

The station's main expenses are salaries, which total US\$70,000 a year, and the license renewal fee, which costs them RWF1,000,000 (Rwandan francs, or US\$2,000) a year. Radio Izuba journalists say that their most pressing concern is having funds to carry out their reporting tasks; for example, they do not have money to pay for transport to chase stories.

The new board has offered some fresh fundraising ideas. One of these is to introduce a membership program called Friends of Radio Izuba (*Amis de Radio Izuba*). Listeners would pay RWF500

(US\$1) per year, giving them the right to send out two song dedications per month and two classified ads or announcements per month. Radio Izuba is also seeking program sponsorship from international organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and is hoping to form a “sister station” relationship with a radio station based in a more wealthy country, which might consider sending interns to Radio Izuba for training and work experience. Radio Izuba would charge fees for training the interns.

The province makes an offer

More controversial are some discussions that Radio Izuba is having with the provincial administration. The provincial administration has offered to find money in its budget to fund the salaries of three permanent employees. This would represent a big chunk of income and has caused heated debate at the station.

“One must be prudent,” says Ayanone, president of the Radio Izuba board, adding that if the province were providing 90% of the budget, that would be a reason to worry. However, some advisors to the station say that Radio Izuba is playing with fire and that the province's funding offer, especially because it is linked to salaries, is a move by the province to grab the station incrementally.

In Rwanda's present media climate, journalists say, there are two “lines” that Radio Izuba could follow editorially. They could either support the government/RPF or they could focus on a community development agenda and challenge the government on development issues.

Radio Izuba has already chosen the more politically neutral development route. But at times, development is intensely political, and there are concerns that reliance on the province for funding will

threaten their independence and their ability to criticize provincial development efforts. Any threat to their independence would further undermine their financial sustainability, as listeners would become disillusioned and other sponsors would be wary of apparent alignment with a specific political agenda.

As long as they are financially vulnerable, it will be difficult for Radio Izuba to refuse the province's money. But to accept it without any safeguards to their independence could be a greater risk than not taking it at all. The challenge for Radio Izuba is to find other sources of income and ways of keeping the province's money neutral.

Ryan Hicks is a Canadian journalist completing his Masters degree in Journalism at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada. Hicks conducted research at Radio Izuba during an internship at Internews Rwanda in July and August 2008.

This article is based on interviews with board members, management, and staff of Radio Izuba, conducted by Ryan Hicks during a visit to the station in July 2008.

ENDNOTES

- 1 “Divisiveness” is the term used in Rwandan media law. Media practitioners and activists criticize the term for its lack of specificity and argue that almost anything could be construed as being “divisive.”
- 2 Reporters Without Borders, Worldwide Press Freedom Index 2008. See www.rsf.org (under Regular reports, then Press Freedom Index).
- 3 Interview with Radio Izuba staff members, July 2008.
- 4 Interview with former Radio Izuba senior staff, July 2008.
- 5 Interview with Radio Izuba board member Jules Gahamanyi, July 2008.

Soweto's “Number One” Station

BY JACOB NTSHANGASE

South Africa's community radio sector was born in the wave of euphoria following the liberation elections that lifted Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress to power in 1994. Today, the sector comprises more than 90 stations broadcasting to different geographic, religious, and cultural communities. Most stations have been on the air for about 13 years.

From the start, sustainability—in particular, financial sustainability—has been a serious concern for the sector. Dependent on grants in the early years, most South African community radio stations today rely on advertising and program sponsorship for income.

By UN standards, South Africa is a middle-income country. However, most of the wealth is concentrated in urban areas, and it is estimated that more than half the population lives in poverty. Therefore, many community radio stations—particularly those serving rural and disadvantaged communities—struggle to attract advertising.

Jozi FM, based in the urban township of Soweto and broadcasting to its six million residents, is an exception. Earning just over US\$635,000 from advertising, program sponsorship, and events (such as concerts) in 2007, Jozi FM covers its costs—and even makes a profit. But as **Jacob Ntshangase** observes in this study, money isn't everything—in fact, high earnings are a risk to Jozi FM's sustainability.

Jozi FM broadcasts from studios in the Khaya Center, which houses a collection of small and medium-sized businesses in Dube, a wealthy suburb of the huge township of Soweto. Soweto, the largest township in South Africa, has a turbulent and proud history. It was the center of the 1976 student uprisings that spread like wildfire across the country, sparking a new era in the liberation struggle that brought about the end of white rule in South Africa.

Jozi FM—also known as “Soweto's backyard radio”—is a project of the Soweto Media Resource Center (SMRC), a nonprofit organization set up in the 1990s to develop and produce alternative and community-based media. The SMRC holds the Jozi FM license on behalf of the Soweto community and runs Jozi FM as one of a number of media and media training initiatives.¹

The station is held in high regard by other stations, because of its financial success. Bringing in about ZAR5 million (5 million South African rands, or US\$635,000) in 2007 (mostly in advertising revenue), Jozi FM is seen as a winner among community radio stations. Jozi FM also leads the field in terms of community radio listenership. The national audience research organization, the South African Advertising Research Foundation (SAARF), estimates that Jozi FM has 560,000 listeners.² The station has hired a Soweto-based marketing agency, which puts these numbers to good use, and has successfully branded Jozi FM as Soweto's “Number One” station.

Contrary to expectations, when you step through its doors, Jozi FM looks just like many other community radio stations in South Africa. The furniture is shabby, some chairs are broken, and computers are in scarce supply. But the

atmosphere is inviting and the walls are covered in posters of musicians and bands, advertising schedules, and photographs of events that Jozi FM has organized. It is from the photos that you get a sense of the station's popularity and pulling power—the venues are packed to the rafters.

But Jozi FM's popularity and income have not brought it stability. The station has been wracked by crises over the past six years, including that of community members organizing against the station and complaining to the broadcast regulator, ICASA,³ that the station is too commercial. In 2007, a group of Sowetans calling themselves “Soweto Concerned Residents” and a committee organized by the Freedom of Expression Institute picketed the station's gates.

The protesters' main concerns were allegations of mismanagement of funds and noncompliance in terms of community

participation as required by broadcasting regulations. They argued that the station's ownership structures and commercial approach presented obstacles to the community's access to the airwaves and therefore to their right to freedom of expression.

ICASA chose not to investigate the allegations of mismanagement, leaving those to Jozi FM to handle internally. The Jozi FM board conducted an investigation and several people were suspended. Both Jozi FM and ICASA agree that the matter has been put to rest. With respect to the problem of community participation, ICASA ruled that the National Community Radio Forum (NCRF)⁴ should work with Jozi FM to organize an annual general meeting so that representatives of the community could elect a new board for the station, make proposals regarding structures for community participation, and eliminate confusion regarding the station's constitution.⁵ The NCRF called in the Electoral Institute for Southern Africa (EISA) to ensure that the election of new board members was run properly.

Under the watchful eye of the EISA, the NCRF, and ICASA, Jozi FM called an annual general meeting in November 2007. Constitutional issues were settled, community participation was reasserted, and EISA supervised the formation of a new board. After the meeting, EISA reported that the election was credible and fair—an “indication of the will of those who took part in the processes.”⁶

The situation has normalized, and the newspaper stories about Jozi FM are positive, for a change. But the question remains: for how long? At the time of writing, ICASA had indicated that there had been additional approaches from concerned community members, and expressed concerns over potential renewed protests. Opinions still differ widely about the causes of the problems.

A question of ownership?

Some Jozi FM staff and volunteers believe that the root cause of the is vagueness in the Broadcasting Act and ICASA regulations regarding community ownership and control. At present, the Broadcasting Act of 1999 states that the licensee “must be managed and controlled by a board which must be democratically elected, from members of the community in the licensed geographic area.”⁷

Community ownership and control are central to the legal definition of community radio in South Africa. They are the principles that make community radio different from public and commercial radio and give stations their niche. However, some stations say that community ownership and control creates instability, because of the ways in which boards are formed and constituted.

The perceived best solution is for the laws to be more specific with regard to clarifying the meaning and limits of community ownership. Clarification should include tighter guidelines for electing boards, so that community groups cannot use what the station regards as ill-defined democratic processes for their own ends. The main concern here is that some individuals, factions, and groups pack annual general meetings, bussing in supporters in order to vote for platforms that secure specific individual or group interests.

Some have also lobbied for a more precise definition of community participation. Stations say that the current definition is too vague and works against their financial sustainability. Organizing and managing meaningful community participation can be expensive, and, some stations argue, the way in which it is currently understood by communities leaves stations open to unreasonable demands and creates instability.

Another school of thought says that it is not the legal definitions or principles that are the problem, but the ways in which stations apply them. In many communities, stations put out a broad call to listeners to come to the annual general meeting, and those who attend vote as individuals. However, in a community as large as Soweto, it is difficult to apply the principle of community ownership through individual ballot. This is why the SMRC, which holds the Jozi FM license, has chosen a structure based on organizational membership. All members of the SMRC must be organizations representing different sectors (women, unions, youth, business, and so on) and based in Soweto. Each organization is entitled to send delegates to the annual meeting. SMRC board members, who are also on the board of Jozi FM, are nominated and elected from these delegates.

The Jozi FM process is currently acceptable to ICASA. However, some community members are clearly unhappy with it and do not feel that the station represents them.

Too much money?

A second issue for some is Jozi FM's wealth. Jozi FM's huge and diverse community of about six million people means that there is great potential for income generation. The station takes advantage of this opportunity and operates with a strong commercial ethic, with great success. Some say that people with vested interests, or those just wanting a slice of the pie, strategically position themselves for jobs at Jozi FM or for membership on the Jozi FM board.

According to Tebogo Poee, chairman of the Jozi FM board and a founding member of the station, Jozi FM's income is high because, he said, “the station operates in a very vibrant market, commercially.” Poee said that about 70% of Jozi FM's income is purely com-

mercial advertising, with about 15% coming from program sponsorship and the rest from events such as concerts and promotions.

Jozi FM's business model and marketing strategy is built around partnerships with businesses. "We have a commercial approach. We run promotional campaigns showcasing the importance of audiences for commercial support. You need to build and sustain relationships with key clients, that is, people who can religiously [consistently] advertise on the station. Advertisers won't place ads because of how well the program is written. It's about the numbers the station delivers," said Poee.

Jozi FM's board and management have over the years vigorously refuted allegations that they are too commercial. With 45 volunteers organized into news, program production, and outreach teams, they argue that they have a proud record of community participation. They are also proud to be able to pay every volunteer a stipend at the end of the month. Their audience research results, they say, indicate that their listeners want more music.

Too much advertising?

Tebogo Poee's comments point to a third issue—the extent to which the station can (and does) rely on a single source of income: advertising. This reliance, some argue, makes the station less concerned with community programming, or the kind of development programming that comes with program sponsorship rather than advertising.

Jozi FM is famous, for example, for its *Cheaters* program, on which the station publicly exposes extramarital affairs and invites people to the studio to confront one another. The program has a huge listenership and is a great commercial success, but arguments continue over whether the program has any community development value or is just worthless tabloid programming.

Community radio culture

One of the most interesting aspects of this story is that Jozi FM never lost its status within the community radio sector as a success story. This must be considered within the context of community radio culture in South Africa.

The "sector," as community radio is commonly labeled, has its roots in the era of community mobilization and activism during the late 1980s and early 1990s, during which the (now ruling) African National Congress called on communities to "make South Africa ungovernable." Many community radio practitioners were part of the struggle to "liberate the airwaves" from apartheid state control, and a rebellious spirit still guides practices in parts of the sector.

There is also a lack of understanding about the role of governance structures, and the sector still suffers from chronic governance, management, and financial problems, despite many courses run by training organizations and the board induction workshops run by the NCRF when new station boards are elected.

When the sector was launched in 1995, donor funding was abundant. The funding often came without strict financial reporting requirements. At the time, most stations were staffed by young people, many of them first-time employees who did not have experience in managing donor partnerships or running finance departments. Donor support has since diminished. Today, the sector depends on advertising; program sponsorship; and government campaigns for income.

Although financially successful so far, ongoing problems at the governance level clearly threaten Jozi FM's sustainability. In the worst-case scenario, if the community cannot impress upon the station's board the need for greater community accountability, financial transparency, and community participa-

tion, ICASA could revoke its license. At this stage, ICASA has chosen not to do so, because, they say, Soweto needs a community radio station.

The Jozi FM crisis has led to multiple stakeholder interventions and substantial costs in time and money. But it remains to be seen whether the interventions have indeed solved the problems.

Jacob Ntshangase is Executive Director of the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism (IAJ), a Johannesburg-based training institute (www.iaj.org.za). He began his career in media as a community radio station manager (Durban Youth Radio), later becoming manager of the IAJ community radio training program. Ntshangase is also a member of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Environmental Development Program Steering Committee and a member of the South African National Editors' Forum.

This report is based on interviews with board members, management, and staff of Jozi FM and ICASA officials. Thanks also to Franklin Huizies, Chief Executive Officer of the NCRF, for his contributions.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Jozi FM has a website, www.jozifm.co.za. At the time of writing, the site was under construction.
- 2 November 2008 SAARF community radio audience measurements (RAMS). See www.saarf.co.za under RAMS (radio), then Radio Listening: Community.
- 3 The Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (www.icasa.org.za).
- 4 The NCRF (www.ncrf.org.za) is the main community radio station association in South Africa. Jozi FM is a member of the NCRF.
- 5 Jozi FM had more than one constitution and it was unclear which one was then actually governing the station.
- 6 EISA Jozi FM Report, 2007.
- 7 Broadcasting Act 4 of 1999, Chapter V1 (3).

Diverse Sources of Funding Keep the Five Rivers Flowing Strongly

BY TUPUR CHATTOPADHYAY

Desi Radio 1062 AM aims to use poetry, music, and writing to unite London's Punjabi community, whose members come from all parts of South Asia. Located in studios in the busy London suburb of Southall, the station has no trouble attracting advertising. But regulations in the United Kingdom restrict the amount of advertising income that community radio stations can earn, so Desi Radio must diversify its income streams. Although they are upset about the legal cap on advertising—and say they could do a lot better without it—station members agree that the need to tap a variety of income sources both enriches their station and strengthens their community links.

Tupur Chattopadhyay visited Desi Radio to find out more.



Radio Desi volunteers dance at weddings to generate income for the station.

One would most definitely think of the Punjab as the vast plains in the northwest of South Asia, divided in 1947 into India and Pakistan. But there is a corner of the Punjab in the United Kingdom, where some 200,000 Punjabi speaking people live in West London. Broadcasting from the heart of this diaspora community is Desi Radio, a community radio station defined by a strong sense of community identity and a commitment to promote the Punjabi language, music, and culture.

London's Punjabi community first started talking about the potential of radio to build community unity way back

in 1978–1979. What brought matters to a head was the Indian government's attack on the Golden Temple, the holiest of the Sikh shrines, in 1984. The aftermath of the attack was one of the darkest phases in the modern history of India—the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and large-scale anti-Sikh riots.

Although the formation of the radio station may have been triggered by violent events, the content of the radio is far from political or religious. Ideas about space and homeland in Southall are thoroughly flexible, and second and third generations of Punjabi immigrants today see themselves as a cohesive part

of English society. At the same time, they are still able and willing to retain their distinctive flavor as Punjabis. Radio Desi is therefore careful to cater to Punjabi immigrants from both sides of the India–Pakistan border, and music and other programming is rarely categorized as “Muslim” or “Hindu.”¹

The station’s name, Desi, is derived from the Punjabi word Des, meaning a specific space or homeland. For Desi Radio, this place is the Land of the Five Rivers, Panjab. The station says that its aim is “to analyze our practices and heritage and so ensure a better understanding of the Panjabi culture and traditions.”²

Radio Desi received its license in 2002, when, under intense pressure from the community media sector and despite protests from the commercial and public broadcast sectors, the broadcast regulator, Ofcom, granted 15 community radio stations “pilot” licenses.³ Desi Radio was one of them.

The station is a project of the Punjabi Center, which aims to promote Punjabi culture in Southall. Desi Radio is the Center’s biggest project. The Center—and therefore Desi Radio—is governed by a board of five directors. Community members are invited to quarterly meetings to give advice, guidance, and feedback to the Center’s board and the radio management team, and the Punjabi Center reports back to the community through its annual general meetings.

Desi Radio has not done formal audience research, but they use UK census figures as a guide and claim a listenership of about 156,000—the number of Punjabi speakers in their coverage area. They believe that they reach all of these people—and many more, because they also stream their programs through their website (www.desiradio.org.uk), which gives them a global audience.

Amarjit Khara, a director of the station and a full-time volunteer, explained their programming policy: “We are here to provide information. Without information one is lost.” The primary broadcast languages are Punjabi and English. Programming includes health, with two doctors coming in every week, family welfare, consumer advice, local council issues, and events in South Asia that will affect Punjabi people living in the United Kingdom. The station’s cultural programming focuses on poetry and music, and in line with their aim to unite all Panjabi people, they are careful to steer clear of religion and sensationalism in political reporting.

Desi Radio’s business model

At present, Desi Radio’s financial backbone is the funds they receive from training and advertising.

Advertising

Ofcom regulations cap the income that community radio stations can generate from advertising at 50% of their total income. Although reaching this target is a dream for most community radio stations, this is not so for the extremely popular Desi Radio, who say that advertisers are queuing up to buy airtime. The station’s marketing department argues that the cap on advertising not only hinders Desi Radio in its quest for financial sustainability, but also jeopardizes small businesses in their area, because they cannot use Radio Desi’s airwaves to reach out to customers.

In a recent letter to Ofcom, Radio Desi argued:

At Desi Radio we are in the enviable and rare position of being approached by small, local businesses that are attracted to Desi Radio’s success, targeted programming and no doubt our low cost advertising.... Desi has to turn business away and may have unwittingly contributed to the demise of

a number of small enterprises in our area. Very many of the businesses that do or desperately wish to advertise with us are small, very local and sometimes fragile, they are also very definitely part of the local community....

The Community Media Association has also been lobbying Ofcom to lift the cap on advertising.⁴ One strategy they are using is to calculate the value of volunteer time. They estimate Desi Radio’s volunteer time as being worth £201,700 (about US\$312,636) a year. The CMA argues, and Desi Radio agrees, that volunteer time should be added to their overall income. This would significantly increase the amount of advertising the station could accept.

Desi Radio will consider itself completely financially sustainable only when all volunteer time is taken into account, and they are able to pay staff.



Welcome to Desi Radio

Broadcasting 24 hours a day on 1602 AM in West London and around the world via the World Wide Web.

We aim to present Panjabi ideas, concepts, and ideals to our listeners through a variety of poetry, writings, and music. We are also seeking to improve links with other communities within West London to reflect the cultural diversity of the area.⁵

Training

Desi Radio has built up an impressive track record as a training station. The training programs are supported by the UK Learning & Skills Council (LSC) and the European Social Fund (ESF) at around £50,000 (US\$155,000) and a smaller grant from the London Development Agency.

The main training program consists of an 18-week radio production course that is offered twice a year. Desi Radio also runs a media training initiative for youths aged 10–18, in addition to providing shorter radio “taster” courses for young people, senior citizens, and women. Involvement of women in the radio station is remarkable—many Asian women with no prior experience with radio or even with using a computer volunteer their time and gain skills and experience.

Cultural services

Desi Radio’s most unique income generation activity—and the most fun—is dancing at weddings. A team of 10 talented women—all volunteers—have adapted traditional Punjabi wedding dances to Punjabi weddings in Britain. The station offers the team as a rental service to weddings and women’s events; there, they perform the *Jago*, a women’s folk dance. The troupe charges £250 (about US\$388) for a girl’s wedding and £300 (about US\$465) for a boy’s wedding. The discrimination in price, says Ms. Khera, is simply to encourage the families to hire them even for the girl’s wedding. In good years, the station has raised over £12,000 (about US\$18,600) through dancing at weddings.

Grants

The balance of funding comes from grants and donations from individuals, trusts, and foundations.

Diverse, difficult to manage—but it works

The funding sources are diverse and sometimes difficult to manage, but Desi Radio’s management say that even if they are allowed to bring in more money from advertising, they’ll keep up their community fundraising efforts. They believe that community fundraising—especially the wedding dancing—is what really markets the station and generates the community support needed to keep the sound of the Five Rivers flowing strongly.

Tupur Chattopadhyay was employed as a researcher for the Internews Community Media Sustainability Guide while studying at London’s School of Oriental and African Studies. She recently completed her master’s degree in Post National Communication and is currently working for a television news channel in Mumbai, India.

This article is based on interviews conducted by Tupur Chattopadhyay at Desi Radio’s premises in Southall, London, in June 2008.

ENDNOTES

- 1 The Partition of India at the end of British rule in 1947 split the province of Punjab between India and Pakistan. The mostly Muslim western part of the province became Pakistan’s Punjab province; the mostly Sikh and Hindu eastern part became India’s Punjab state. Partition led to mass migrations of Hindus and Sikhs living in the west to India and Muslims living in the east to Pakistan. Thousands of people were killed in intense intercommunal violence that accompanied the Partition.
- 2 The station’s objectives are set out on its website, www.desiradio.org.uk.
- 3 Ofcom is the independent regulator and competition authority for the UK communications industries, with responsibilities across television, radio, telecommunications, and wireless communications services. A couple of years after issuing the first community radio pilot licenses, Ofcom opened up the licensing

process and granted licenses to 145 community stations. See www.ofcom.org.uk.

- 4 The Community Media Association is the representative body for community media in the United Kingdom. Members include community radio and television and community-based Internet projects. See www.commedia.org.uk.
- 5 From Radio Desi’s website, www.desiradio.org.uk.

“It’s your baby —it needs food”

BY BILL SIEMERING

Community media have a special role to play in post conflict situations: bringing people together, discussing differences, and promoting peace. Radio Gbafth in Mile 91, Sierra Leone, is one of several community stations in Sierra Leone that have taken on the role of peacemakers as the country rises to the challenges of reconstruction after 10 years of civil war, which ended in 2002.

Started by a rebel soldier of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) who sought forgiveness from the government, Radio Gbafth began in secret. Today it broadcasts in the open, but the situation in Sierra Leone is not easy for radio stations, which struggle with poor funding, scarce advertising, and unreliable electricity. **Bill Siemering** discusses Radio Gbafth’s struggles to become sustainable and provide programming that meets the needs of the people. Financial sustainability is a problem, and the station must educate its community about ownership.

After a decade of civil war, 75% of Sierra Leoneans live on less than two U.S. dollars a day, and one in four people is “food-poor,” meaning that they cannot afford a basic diet, according to the World Bank. Youth unemployment is rife in the country. Two-thirds of the population is illiterate and unemployment hovers at 70%. Among the unemployed are a large pool of youth and excombatants who could take up arms again. High unemployment rates and low expectations of a better future are a major cause of instability in West Africa.¹

This is the context of Radio Gbafth, Mile 91, Sierra Leone.

Mission statement: To give voice to the poor and marginalized, to gain access to information and education through radio pertaining to their own welfare and development.

the work of Talking Drum Studio, and individuals dedicated to using radio for peacemaking.

Ahmed Muckson Sesay was a rebel who wanted to be a bridge between the rebels and the government. With this in mind, he wrote to the government asking forgiveness and permission to form an organization for excombatants to work for peace. After the government granted his request, he formed the Organization for Peace and Reconstruction and Development (OPARD). The aim of the organization was to transform rebels into peacemakers.



Hassan Koroma, Manager Radio Gbafth, Mile 91

Radio Gbafth is located in the sprawling trading center called Mile 91, on the road between the capital, Freetown, and the second-largest city, Bo. Mile 91 was on the border between rebel and government held territories during the civil war. The station’s origins stem from the combination of this location,

Sesay worked with the Talking Drum Studio (TDS), a media production unit dedicated to conflict resolution.² TDS makes radio plays and current affairs programs focusing on peace and reconciliation in several countries in Africa that are struggling with conflict or its aftermath. In Mile 91, TDS recorded

interviews with rebels and messages from children who had escaped from the rebels, urging those still with the rebels to meet with their families and return. Ahmed believed that a radio station in Mile 91 could play an important role in peacemaking in Sierra Leone.

During the war, the town of Makeni in Sierra Leone's Northern Province was captured by the rebels. A local radio station, Radio Mankeneh, relocated to Mile 91 to escape destruction back home. In Mile 91, Radio Mankeneh provided training and guidance to the new station. "Mankeneh" means "hidden" in Krio,³ which described the station at that time. When the planners in Mile 91 looked for a name for the new station, they decided on the opposite concept, and named it Radio Gbafth, which means "open."

Sesay is the chair of the board of directors; the manager is Hassan Yamba Koroma. Koroma also has personal reasons to work for peace: the rebels killed his mother. Koroma is an enthusiastic advocate for community radio. Like many of the 16 other staff members, he is a schoolteacher and takes no salary from the radio station.

Programming that makes a difference

Radio Gbafth is on the air from 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. and then again from 4:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. Programs are developed through focus groups with listeners, and Radio Gbafth takes great care to ensure that community needs are met. Programs include:

- *Tatasu*, which means "it is ours" in Temne.⁴ *Tatasu* focuses on local music, local sounds, and messages sent to loved ones and relatives. It is one of the most popular programs, drawing callers from far and wide. When people identify where they are calling from, the station learns about its coverage area.

- *Spider Web*, which has introduced a character called the Spider, who tackles serious topics with a light touch. The Spider deals with health, farming, and health issues such as litter and trash. He promotes clean-up campaigns—for example, the Spider will call attention to dirty areas in the market or along the roads and within a few days, the citizens will have cleaned it up. The Spider has also explored contentious and sensitive topics like early marriage and violence against women.



Children at Mile 91, Sierra Leone, the heart of Radio Gbafth's listenership community.

- Local council members come on the air for *Waytin Daie Bi* (What Is Happening?). The focus is on development, on explaining how local council money is generated and spent, as well as on the responsibility of citizens in decentralization. Youth monitor local council events and talk of how to move from destruction to construction.
- *Takaran*, a program to promote quality education through panel discussions with teachers, pupils, and parents, is aired twice a week.
- *Learning Zone*, on which secondary school teachers present instructional programs and lectures three times a week to coincide with the school timetable, so that students can listen while in class.
- *Salone in the News*, which translates news from local weekly newspapers

and international sources into local languages.

- Two programs by and for women, one of which deals with women's health and safer sex, advising girls to use condoms to avoid pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. The other, *Woman in the House*, discusses the responsibility of men towards their wives and children, and discourages violence against women.
- Radio Gbafth also agrees to broadcast sponsored programs if the topics are relevant. These include coverage of the anti-corruption commission and the Special Court for Sierra Leone, which tries people who have committed serious crimes under international humanitarian law since 1996.

The station monitors audience response to programs and conducts informal focus groups and surveys. If a program is not having a social impact, it is removed from the schedule.

Support from the community

The station was built from the ground up by donations of time and supplies from the community. The community donated the land for the station, young people made the bricks, and artisans built and painted it. In 2003 Koroma met with the local chiefs and other stakeholders and they agreed to collect money from citizens for the station.

Teachers, youth, and pastors went house-to-house and collected 1,000 leones (33 U.S. cents) from every house. However, that approach did not continue in subsequent years. Hassan explained why:

"One very interesting thing about community radio is the word 'community.' Sometimes it means 'it is ours,' ours in the sense that is the community's own radio. But looking at the (community's) responsibility in keeping up sustenance is very challenging, because the

community needs more education. They need more education [to learn] that the radio you are listening to is your baby, but as a baby, it needs food. So this is our challenge.”⁵

As an alternative way to raise funds from the community, Radio Gbafth organizes the annual Radio Gbafth Festival, which takes place around New Year’s Day. The three-day festival includes music, soccer, and other games. It has proven to be a good way to promote the station, provide entertainment, and raise funds. After expenses, the station earns about 4,611,000 leones (US\$1,500) from the festival.

Dedications are aired on Mondays and Fridays and generate (307,400) leones (US\$100) a week during peak times (January through March—there are fewer dedications in the rainy season, because transport is so difficult and business is reduced). Many radio stations earn money by accepting dedications and greetings from listeners through phone calls and letters. Radio Gbafth takes this one step further: a salesman travels throughout the community and records greetings on a mini-disk recorder, charging 500 leones (about 16 U.S. cents) per greeting, giving truth to the words, “the Voice of the People,” which are painted on the outside wall of the station.

Other sources of income include sponsorship of programs and advertising. Coverage of the Anti-Corruption Commission brings in 1,537,000 leones (US\$500) every three months; the Special Court for Sierra Leone brings in 227,480 leones (US\$74) a month, when in session; the National Lottery pays 156,770 leones (US\$51) a month for advertising; and Celtel pays 101,440 leones (US\$33) a month. Advertisements vary by the season, and the station does not accept ads for tobacco or alcohol, because they are destructive to the health of the people.

The average monthly expenses are about 5 million leones (US\$1,625) and the average monthly income is 3,255,000 leones (US\$1,059). The Yoni Community Bank extends a line of credit so that the station can keep operating until sponsorship grants are received.

Power in the partnership

The largest single expense is for fuel to run the generator and the motorbike that reporters use to go out and cover stories. These two items consume about 600 liters (about 158 gallons) of fuel a month. At 4,300 leones (US\$1.40) a liter, this expense totals about 2,580,000 leones (US\$840) a month. To reduce this cost, Koroma plans to move the station to a new location near the Africell mobile phone company, which will let Radio Gbafth use their generator for electricity in return for advertising.

The new location is also more central. Radio Gbafth will offer photocopying services to the community as another source of income. The community has once again donated the land and many will donate their labor to build the new premises.

Bill Siemering is the president of Developing Radio Partners, a nonprofit that supports local radio in developing countries. Developing Radio Partners grew out of Bill’s experience since 1993 working with the Open Society Institute in South Africa, Mozambique, and Mongolia, among other countries. Bill was the first director of programming at National Public Radio in the United States.

dia studios with ethnically diverse teams of journalists and producers. Programs aim to stimulate national dialogue on critical issues.

- 3 Krio is the *lingua franca* throughout Sierra Leone, where there are 23 languages.
- 4 Temne is a tribal language spoken as a first language by nearly a third of the population, located mainly in the north.
- 5 Interview by Grant Fuller, Makeni, Sierra Leone, August 19, 2008. Grant Fuller is a volunteer consultant based in Sierra Leone.

ENDNOTES

- 1 UN Office for West Africa Report, December 2005.
- 2 Talking Drum Studios is a project of the international NGO Search for Common Ground, which uses media (radio, print, television, and other media) as a tool for building peace and creating opportunities to transform conflict. Talking Drum Studios includes multime-

Sustainability Through Partnerships: A Lasting Cup of Coffee

BY JEAN FAIRBAIRN

Capacity to forge and maintain partnerships is vitally important to sustainability. **Jean Fairbairn** explores a unique partnership between a local radio station and the international coffee industry. This example of partnership also points to two other often-neglected but crucial sustainability issues. The first is affordable listening: if listeners cannot afford batteries for their radio receivers, they cannot listen to programs and the station will not be able to reach its entire potential audience. The second is ensuring that producers of programs have access to high-quality specialist information that they can pass on to their listeners. The Coffee Lifeline project in Rwanda has found innovative solutions to both problems.

Coffee farmers in Rwanda are benefiting from a unique partnership between a local radio station, an international foundation, and coffee roasters in the United States.

The partnership was initiated by Peter Kettler, a trader in the specialty coffee industry based in Madison, Wisconsin in the United States. Kettler explained his reasons for starting the project: “I was struck by the fact that coffee farmers—the people at the beginning of the supply chain—could not afford to eat, while customers in cafés in the United States were paying US\$3.50 for a cup of speciality coffee,” he said. “If coffee farmers don’t see coffee farming as a viable means of making a living, what will happen to the rest of the supply chain?”

It was with sustainability of the global coffee industry in mind that Kettler began exploring ways of improving the lives of coffee farmers. Two things immediately stood out: first, many coffee growers were not consistently using farming methods that would produce good-quality coffee; second, farmers were unaware of coffee prices and were thus often cheated by buyers.

There are more than 500,000 coffee farmers in Rwanda, and coffee is Rwanda’s primary export, followed by tea and bananas. “The price of coffee



LINDA CULLEN

Coffee farmers listen to programs in the fields, using Freeplay Foundation’s wind-up and solar-powered Lifeline Radio.

price changes every three minutes,” said Kettler. “Prices were being broadcast on national radio, but messages were not getting to farmers, because they did not have radios or could not afford batteries. So the people buying the cherries [raw coffee seeds] could—and did—take advantage of the farmers’ ignorance.”

Sustainable listening through renewable energy

Kettler approached the Freeplay Foundation, an international charity that distributes wind-up and solar-powered radios to provide sustainable access to information and education to people in need.¹ The Freeplay Lifeline radio was especially developed for use in rural conditions. It is robust, can withstand dust and heat, and has powerful speakers for group listening. The Lifeline radio costs nothing to use, because it is powered through renewable energy.

The Freeplay Foundation and Kettler formed the Coffee Lifeline project and the partners set about raising funds from coffee companies to purchase Lifeline radios to distribute to coffee farmers. It was difficult in the beginning. “But once I started presenting the project as a supply chain investment as opposed to a charity, then doors started opening,” said Kettler.

InterAmerican Coffee, a specialty coffee importer based in Houston, Texas, funded the initial pilot project, which included 60 radios. Soon, money for radios started flowing in from coffee roasters. By 2006, more than 130 had been distributed to coffee cooperatives working with PEARL (Partnership to Enhance Agriculture in Rwanda through Linkages), an NGO helping Rwandan coffee farmers improve their crops.

The second phase of the Coffee Lifeline project was to create information that coffee farmers would value. PEARL closed in 2006, but some of its work is being carried on by a new NGO, SPREAD (Sustaining Partnerships to enhance Rural Enterprise and Agribusiness Development), which operates with funding from USAID. SPREAD’s director, Dr. Tim Schilling, saw the benefits of radio education for coffee cooperatives and private farmers and

agreed that SPREAD should sponsor a coffee-focused radio program to be broadcast on a local radio station. The station, Radio Salus, is based at the National University of Rwanda, which is located conveniently right next door to SPREAD’s offices in the town of Butare in Rwanda’s Eastern Province.

Radio Salus (broadcasting frequencies: 97.0 and 101.9) is owned by the university. Originally set up as a training station for journalism students in the late 1990s, it was one of the first nonstate stations to be granted a license after the 1994 genocide, in which some 800,000 people were killed. After the genocide, all media in Rwanda, but particularly radio, were tightly controlled, because of the role played by Radio Milles Collines in encouraging the mass slaughter of ethnic Tutsis by ethnic Hutus. The government that has held power since 1994 at first refused to license nonstate radio stations, using Radio Milles Collines as an example of how radio could foment interethnic violence. Under pressure from the international community to liberalize the media environment, the government began taking steps to open the airwaves in the late 1990s. Radio Salus went on the air in 2005.²

Station manager Aldo Havugimana describes Radio Salus as a “university–community” station. According to Havugimana, Radio Salus trains about 60 students a year, during which they also gain work experience. As time has gone by, programming has broadened to include the wider community and Radio Salus’s program schedule today includes a variety of news, entertainment, and information programming. The station’s signal can be heard across the entire country and in neighboring Burundi.

Program sponsorship

SPREAD, Radio Salus, and Coffee Lifeline have developed a weekly program for coffee farmers called *Imbere Heza*

(Bright Future), which is presented by one of Radio Salus’s most popular presenters, Emma-Claudine Ntirenganya. Using guidelines that emerged from focus group discussion with coffee farmers, Ntirenganya compiles *Imbere Heza* into a 30-minute program that includes international news about coffee that she finds through Internet research, an interview with someone from the Rwandan coffee sector, health issues, and a children’s story.

The radio program is being sponsored for the next two years through a donation by the United States–based company Green Mountain Coffee Roasters. The donation covers Radio Salus’s costs, including airtime, the presenter’s salary, and administration. Actor Tom Hanks, the Freeplay Foundation’s U.S. “ambassador,” funded more Lifeline radios for listeners—almost 450 have been distributed so far.

Coffee Lifeline recently conducted surveys and focus groups with farmers to find out whether they liked the programs and whether they were useful. “From the responses, we were able to determine that even in its short history, *Imbere Heza* has become *the* voice for coffee in Rwanda,” said Kettler. “Several farmers said that they were able to expand their farms based on the agronomic information they heard, and one farmer said he was able to put an addition onto his house due to the increased revenue he had received. A number of farmers said that their neighbors were now planting coffee trees after seeing how profitable coffee farming could be.”

Future programs will include the journey of a Rwandan coffee cherry from the farm to the washing station and from there to the supermarket or café. “Most farmers don’t know what happens to their crop once it leaves the washing station—just as most coffee drinkers have very little idea of how the coffee gets into their cup!”

The Coffee Lifeline project is now being evaluated. The project is financially sustainable at present through support from Green Mountain and other coffee traders in the United States. However, Kettler is keen to find other sources for the longer term.

Ultimately, Kettler hopes that the program will be funded by Rwandan coffee cooperatives, which are slowly starting to become profitable. “We would like the program to become part of Rwanda’s internal coffee economy, so that it is internally driven and the partnership is a direct one, between the radio station and the community of coffee farmers.”

Coffee Lifeline on the Web

After the evaluation, the intention is to expand Coffee Lifeline to other countries. As part of this expansion, Kettler has raised funds from another coffee importer, Volcafe Speciality Coffee, to develop a website, www.coffeelifeline.org.³ The website will inform the public about the Coffee Lifeline project and invite donations. But its main function will be to provide vital information about coffee prices, farming methods, and other issues relevant to coffee farmers in Rwanda and other coffee-growing countries. Program producers like Ntirenganya will be able to use the website to find up-to-date information to pass on to their listeners. Ntirenganya said that she was looking forward to the

moment the website went live. “The farmers are listening and they like the program,” she said.

There are concerns that *Imbere Heza* may come to an end if there is no further funding for Radio Salus’s costs. However, according to Ntirenganya, Coffee Lifeline has planted a seed that will grow whether or not funding is available: “Even if *Imbere Heza* is discontinued as a program through lack of funds, I will continue to weave coffee information into my programs. The website will make it easy for me to do this. *Imbere Heza* has made me more aware of the issues facing coffee farmers, and a lot of our listeners are coffee farmers or members of coffee farmers. The program is good for the station and good for the farmers, so the demand is there and we must respond,” said Ntirenganya.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Fairbairn identified the Coffee Lifeline as an example for the guide while employed by the Freeplay Foundation. The Foundation (www.freeplayfoundation.org) continues to support the Coffee Lifeline project.
- 2 Radio Salus has a website, whose address is www.salus.nur.zc.rw. Unfortunately, “administrative problems” with the website meant that it was not functional at the time of writing.
- 3 The website was under construction at the time of writing.

The Road from Community Service to Social Enterprise

BY JEAN FAIRBAIRN

Media for Development (MFD) is a nonprofit organization based in London that uses media to reach, engage, and empower communities in the United Kingdom and internationally. Like many nonprofits, MFD struggles with the concept of financial sustainability—and how to reduce its dependence on donors. **Jean Fairbairn** visited MFD to find out about how an innovative prison-based community television program provided MFD with the key to becoming financially sustainable.



Trainees at Media For Development's T.I.M.E. project learn a variety of television skills.

When Media for Development's Chief Executive, James Greenshields, defines financial sustainability "as having sufficient reserves to see you through the next six months," he is taking a realistic view of what it means to be a medium-sized, mostly donor-funded media support agency based in London.¹

There are literally thousands of grant-makers in the United Kingdom, including individuals, family foundations and trusts, community and corporate donors, and large international agencies. However, there is intense competition for funds for media support, and fundraising is time-consuming and draining for an organization whose 11 staff members are primarily project implementers and media producers.

Tired of being fully supported by donors, in 2006 MFD began looking seriously at other ways of generating income. Two prison-based community media projects have shown them a way forward:

Radio Wanno is a community radio broadcast and training unit in HMP Wandsworth, a men's prison in the Wandsworth area of London.² MFD trains prisoners in all aspects of radio management and programming and prisoners broadcast live and pre-produced programs through the prison's in-cell broadcast system. Training is accredited through the state education system, so when the prisoners are released, they bring to their new lives valuable work experience and recognized qualifications in different aspects of media and radio.

The Media House at HMP Downview, a women’s prison based in Sutton in Surrey, has a prisoner-led television channel. With MFD support and training, prisoners produce programs for a channel called T.I.M.E. (Television Information Media Education), which is broadcast over the prison’s in-cell TV system. T.I.M.E. provides a mixture of programs, including debate, interviews with prison staff, life stories of prisoners, and entertainment. Like Radio Wanna, the Media House is both a community media and a training unit, providing accredited training and work experience.

“Helping people grow and change”

“We have men and women going into further and higher education—which is the meaning of media for development. We are helping people grow and change,” said Greenshields.

Although it was difficult to convince the prisons of the value of the projects at first, the partnership is now blossoming. According to James, prison education normally leans towards literacy and numeracy and was not attracting students, because prisoners are sometimes too proud to “go to school.” MFD took a different approach.

“We ask for a certain amount of literacy and numeracy, but we can weave it into other skills—administration and using computers, working as a group, better communications, and improved self-esteem. This is more attractive to prisoners.” After training, prisoners can work at T.I.M.E. or Radio Wanna, and are paid according to prison rates. MFD dedicates a full-time professional project manager to each of the two prison projects, and training is contracted out to further education institutions.

For the first 18 months, the project was funded by a combination of donations and gifts of products and services from the prisons. Today, through support

from the prisons, the projects are fully self-sustainable.

“We were clear at the outset that we could only support the two projects for 18 months, and then the prisons would have to find resources if they wanted us to play a role. At end of 18 months, we signed an agreement with both prisons for payment for a full-time MFD media for development manager, costs relating to running the radio and



empowering isolated communities through media

TV stations, and a contribution to core costs of MFD. The costs of the tutors are paid for by the Learning and Skills Council.”³

The projects provide what prisons want, said Greenshields: “Prisons are set targets by government to provide prisoners with qualifications and engage prisoners in meaningful activities. Radio Wanna and T.I.M.E. not only do this; they also improve communications in a communications-poor environment. Prisons are competitive for good publicity and good press, and these projects have attracted positive publicity. They also look good when inspectors come around—they are memorable.”

T.I.M.E. has had another significant spinoff for MFD. The Downview prison community television project led MFD to consider creating a television production unit that would operate outside the prison walls, leading to the creation of Inside Job Productions, which is a production unit run from MFD’s London offices and staffed by a combination of MFD personnel and women prisoners on day release. The aim is to build on the talent and creative energy generated through T.I.M.E.

A social enterprise

Inside Job Productions is run as a social enterprise—a business that is run primarily for social rather than financial gain. James sees himself as a social entrepreneur, “an individual who identifies social challenges and applies the skills and attitudes of an entrepreneur to address those issues. Commercial entrepreneurs want to make money; social entrepreneurs want to improve people’s lives. I am comfortable with risk; opportunistic; I love ideas and difficult social challenges and how to address them.”

The unit accepts commissions from the prisons to make training films and also contracts to make films, CDs, and videos for other NGOs and charities. The unit’s principles are developmental, promoting communications, involving community, and developing people—but it also makes a profit: “We employ graduates from courses run by the Media House at Downview as production assistants on all commissions, giving them valuable media and small business experience. The prisoners come to our offices on day release and return to prison in the evening.”

A flexible, nimble structure

Taking a social enterprise approach had implications for MFD’s structure, said Greenshields: “We are not a charity—you cannot be a charity and be entrepreneurial. If you are a charity in the United Kingdom, you need a particular structure and a board. I know that when we come up with an idea we need to move—not wait for the next quarterly board meeting. We are a company limited by guarantee—a nonprofit structure which ensures we can remain flexible, nimble, and low on bureaucracy. But our profits go back into the organization and its projects.”

There are disadvantages to not being a charity: “We lose out on tax exemptions and there are certain pots of money you

cannot access. But even this is starting to change, with the development aid sector increasingly realizing you don't need to be a charity to institute social change," said Greenshields.

In 2008, Inside Job Productions was still operating with some grant support, but through commissions it was already contributing to the core running costs of MFD, allowing MFD to develop new projects without grant support. Greenshields added, "While we will always recognize the value of donor support in starting MFD, and donor loyalty, we have become tired of being wholly grant funded. We took Inside Job Productions to donors and made this clear. We said with a grant of £250,000 over three years we could develop the unit to the point where it could substantially fund all our operations. We received the money on the basis that it would help MFD become sustainable—and we are starting to move in that direction."

MFD have been lucky with donors, in that they have been able to build the kind of relationships that foster financial sustainability. "The donors we don't know that well aren't interested. But the donors working with Inside Job are interested in the impact on financial

sustainability of MFD and are funding us with that in mind. They have, for example, funded salaries of senior people to work with the prisons project—this frees me up to think about different directions for the organization."

Greenshields made another point about donor relationships: "The money can be focused on the relationship you develop with individuals in a donor agency. Donors need to trust—they have to like you. But I always know where the power lies. I am the one who always properly responds to emails. They are the ones who have the money. If they behave badly, I'll be the one who turns the other cheek. That is the price of power imbalance. Where there is a proper partnership, things are different."

ENDNOTES

- 1 Media for Development has an informative website, www.mediafordevelopment.org.uk.
- 2 HMP stands for "Her Majesty's Prison."
- 3 The Learning and Skills Council is a publicly funded body in the UK that plans and funds quality education for people outside universities. Its aims are to improve skills among young people and adults and to improve education and training delivery.

Listener-Supported Public Radio in the United States

BY BILL SIEMERING

National Public Radio's Mission Statement

The mission of NPR is to work in partnership with member stations to create a more informed public—one challenged and invigorated by a deeper understanding and appreciation of events, ideas, and cultures. To accomplish our mission, we produce, acquire, and distribute programming that meets the highest standards of public service in journalism and cultural expression; we represent our members in matters of their mutual interest; and we provide satellite interconnection for the entire public radio system.

(www.npr.org/about/nprworks.html)

The assumption behind all public broadcasting is that broadcasters need additional support to produce information and cultural programs that may not attract a commercial-size audience. Like public radio stations, community radio stations are driven by service missions. We have focused on how communities support radio stations in some of the poorest countries. **Bill Siemering** looks at how public radio is supported in the most affluent country in the world.

Public support is one of the defining features of public radio everywhere. Public radio receives some or all of its funding from the public, directly from voluntary donations, through license fees, or as state subsidies raised through taxes. This is true because the assumption behind all public broadcasting is that broadcasters need additional support to produce information and cultural programs that may not attract a commercial-size audience.

In the United States, public radio stations receive a combination of donations, license fees, and subsidies from taxes, *plus* corporate and foundation underwriting.¹ The U.S. legal system distinguishes only two categories of radio: commercial and noncommercial. There is no distinction between public and community stations, which both fall into the noncommercial category. Falling into the broad noncommercial category, community radio stations in the United States are regarded as public radio and are therefore eligible for public funding.

There is a very active community radio movement in the United States. These are public radio stations which, in the absence of any legal distinction, *describe themselves* as community radio stations. In practice, the line between public radio stations and those self-described as community stations is blurred. What makes community stations distinct within the broad public radio landscape is that they broadcast to smaller and more distinct audiences, they have smaller budgets and broadcast more

locally originated programming, that is, programming produced by nonprofessional program makers and disc jockeys (rather than syndicated programs). On average, local programming on community stations constitutes 65%–95% of the schedule, in contrast to 35% on the large public radio stations.² The majority of public radio stations (including stations self-described as community radio) are licensed to either a community nonprofit organization or a college or university.

Self-defined community radio

There is no simple definition of a community radio station in the United States. The National Federation of Community Broadcasters (NFCB),³ formed in 1970 as an umbrella organization for community radio stations, has declared these key values:

- Localism
- Encouraging collaboration
- Providing quality public service
- Diversity of media ownership and diversity in operations and programming
- Cultural preservation
- Empowering people with information
- Building community

Not all community radio stations uphold these same values and not all are members of the NFCB. The core of what are regarded as community stations are those serving rural areas, Native American reservations, Latino communities and other ethnic minorities.

Community stations often have a variety of both on-air and in-community outreach projects. For example, one station in a community of 5,000 people held 10–15 discussion groups about community issues that informed a weekly radio program, called *First Thursday Conversations*. Other stations sponsor local music festivals, organize citizen journalism programs, and engage with Diaspora populations.

Broadcasting began in the United States as noncommercial educational radio at the University of Wisconsin. The station initially targeted the university, but demand was such that they eventually included programs for farmers, educational programs for rural schools, university lectures, and classical music in their schedule.

At first, commercial radio networks also produced educational, cultural, and information programs; the NBC Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Arturo Toscanini is one of the best examples of this commitment to the arts by commercial radio. However, as time went by, this kind of programming gave way to more profitable entertainment programming, highlighting the need for and the special role of noncommercial radio.

Creation of a grant structure

With the advent of educational television—an extremely expensive medium—the need for additional funding to support broadcasting became necessary. In 1967 the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) was created as a way of distributing government funds without government interference in programming. Through this system, the U.S. Congress makes grants to the CPB and the CPB then distributes funds to public radio and television stations. The support is intended for production of local programming and to enable the acquisition of national programming by local stations.

The CPB was also mandated to create a national network to connect public stations, and so National Public Radio (NPR) was formed as a nonprofit organization that would make and distribute news, current affairs, and cultural programming. Using grants from the CPB, public radio stations pay fees to broadcast NPR programming. Stations are not obliged to broadcast NPR programming and take it only when they believe it is of value to their listeners.

NPR does not own any stations, but is a membership organization. Most of the NPR board of directors are elected from the pool of public radio station managers. This means control comes from the bottom up. In this sense, public broadcasting in the United States is very different from the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and other European public broadcasters, which own and operate stations and are supported by mandatory license fees.

Listener-supported public radio

Initially, fewer than 100 radio stations met the CPB criteria for grant support. The number of stations has grown—as have their operating costs. Now there are 860 stations receiving CPB grants to pay for NPR programming. Through these stations, NPR programming reaches 26 million people weekly.⁴

On average, CPB funds now account for 16% of a station’s budget (with a low of 6% and a high of 21%). However, stations that specifically serve rural and minority communities, including African-American, Native American, Latino, and multicultural licensees receive higher funding from the CPB, in some cases, as much two-thirds of their budgets, because listeners don’t have the financial resources to provide support.

Roughly half of the income (45%–55%) for the majority of public radio stations comes from listeners’ voluntary contri-

butions. Therefore, programming must be significantly different from commercial radio and of high quality, so that listeners are motivated to give.

Stations devote an average of 30 days a year to on-air fundraising. Fundraising drives generally go on for a week, during which announcers create a number of 10-minute breaks each day within the regular programming and remind listeners of the unique qualities and values of noncommercial radio and that it is “listener-supported public radio.” Contributions increase by about 40% when incentives, such as CDs, coffee mugs, and books are offered in exchange for larger donations. The range of giving per listener ranges from 1 in 6 to 1 in 10.

Because many public radio listeners are well educated and influential, and have relatively high incomes, they are an ideal target for the corporate support that is given through underwriting announcements, such as, “Programming is made possible with a grant from Barnes and Noble booksellers.”⁵ In 2009, NPR anticipates generation of 40% of its income from stations (payment for programs broadcast); 28% from corporate sponsorships; 15% from gifts and grants (including foundations, individuals, and the CPB), and the balance of 17% from investments and other interest, and rental of studios, equipment, and office space, and product sales, including books, calendars, radio receivers, and recorded radio shows, as advertised on the NPR website.⁶ Community stations earn up to 30% or more from underwriting.

The system has its downside

Stations are stronger with these diversified sources of funding. Relying on listeners for half their income forces producers, both locally and nationally, to deliver high-quality programming. But there is a downside to this source. For example, news and public

affairs listeners are the largest contributors—and their musical preferences do not include solo piano, violin, or vocal music, so these forms of music were eliminated from playlists. Gradually, in many stations, news and public affairs programming pushed out classical music altogether, leaving only a few public radio stations that carry classical music.

Coordinated donor support

In correspondence, Paul Kaiser, chair of the African Studies Center at the University of Pennsylvania, wrote:

What is not sustainable in the United States is indeed expected to be sustainable everywhere else. For any initiative to be sustainable, there needs to be a number of shareholders with a stake in the outcome to complement an organizational goal of self-sufficiency. International donors, government, civil society, and private sector are essential partners here.⁷

Public radio in the United States, and the programming network, NPR, would not have grown this successfully without its government support through the CPB. And as noted previously, this support can still constitute up to two-thirds of the income for stations serving the poor. If this is the case in the relatively wealthy United States overall, the accomplishments of stations described elsewhere in this guide are all the more remarkable.

Given the proven value of local radio with limited resources to achieve the development goals of improving health, agriculture, and livelihoods, holding public officials accountable, and strengthening civil society, the need for coordinated donor action to support the sector is obvious.

Bill Siemering was the first NPR director of programming. Siemering wrote the original mission for NPR and with NPR staff, developed the program All Things Considered. He is a member of the Community Media Sustainability Guide Advisory Committee.

ENDNOTES

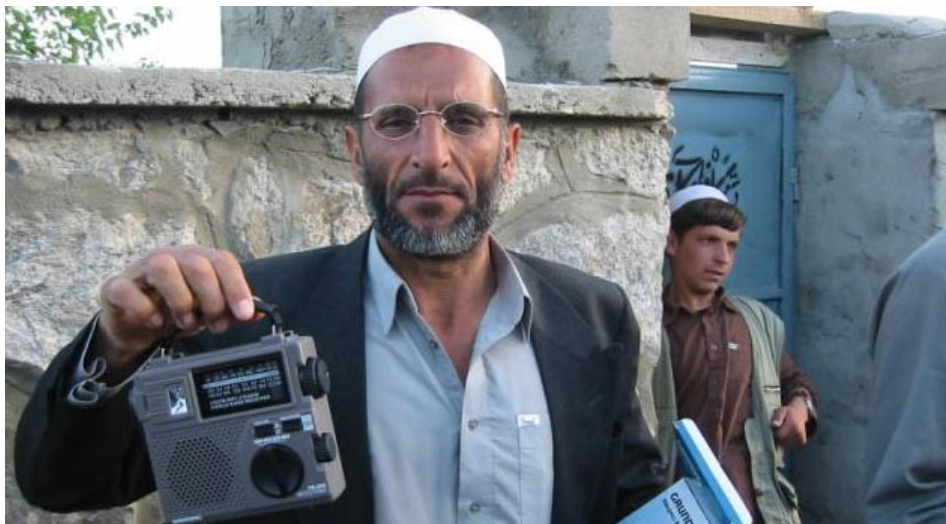
- 1 Underwriting is similar to advertising. The main difference is that underwriting tends to be more factual and informative: there are restrictions on qualitative and comparative statements, such as claiming to be “better,” “cheaper,” “the best,” and so on.
- 2 Ginny Berson, vice president of NFCB, in conversation with the author, August 26, 2008.
- 3 See the NFCB website, www.nfcb.org.
- 4 See the NPR website, www.npr.org, under the About NPR section.
- 5 This is an example of “underwriting”: it simply notes the sponsor, without comparing the sponsor or its products to anyone or anything else.
- 6 NPR CFO Jim Elder, in email correspondence with the author, February 2009.
- 7 Email to author, April 2, 2003.

Balancing Continued Aid with a Public Service Mission in a Competitive Market

BY JEAN FAIRBAIRN

Since 2001, when a United States–led military intervention drove out the Taliban, Afghanistan’s media scene has begun to change. Under the Taliban regime, which ruled Afghanistan through a rigid and extreme interpretation of Islamic Sharia law, the media were strictly controlled. The Taliban banned television, renamed the state radio network as Radio Voice of Sharia, and devoted airtime mostly to religious programs and official propaganda.

After the toppling of the Taliban regime, a period of reconstruction and democracy development saw international aid pour into Afghanistan. With support from USAID in 2002, the international media development agency Internews launched an ambitious media assistance project that has seen the creation of a network of 37 radio stations broadcasting to communities throughout Afghanistan. As part of this project, Internews created Salam Watandar, a program production unit that produces quality current affairs and development programming for broadcast by the network of stations.



A resident of Qarabagh with his radio. Radio Qarabagh is one of Salam Watandar’s network of 37 radio stations.

From the start, Internews emphasized the financial sustainability of both Salam Watandar and the network’s stations. Afghanistan today still struggles with the legacy of decades of civil war, including poverty, land mines, poor infrastructure, and ongoing insurgency by the Taliban.

Jean Fairbairn discussed with Internews and Salam Watandar staff some of the issues facing Salam Watandar and the network of stations as they seek a sustainable business model in Afghanistan’s still unstable environment.



Years of conflict in Afghanistan have left communications infrastructure devastated. Radio Qarabagh's post box is located next to Qarabagh Bazaar so that listeners can easily drop off letters with messages for the station to broadcast. Qarabagh is in Kabul province

Since the launch of its media development assistance program in Afghanistan in 2002, Internews has established 37 community radio stations in the country, reaching an estimated 12 million Afghans (about 35% of the population).

In 2003, Internews set up Salam Watandar, an independent radio program production unit in Kabul. Salam Watandar's role is to produce quality development and democracy programming to be aired by the network of stations. Today, Salam Watandar broadcasts 14 hours of programming each day. The programming includes documentaries and interviews produced by Salam Watandar staff and music and content from external sources, including independent producers and the individual stations. The stations receive the shows through standard digital television satellite decoders and rebroadcast them over local transmitters.¹

One of the Internews Network's core goals is to leave behind sustainable local media entities in the countries in which

it works. From the start, therefore, business development for Salam Watandar and the radio stations was central to the Internews implementation strategy. The model is one of interdependence: to generate income, Salam Watandar must have access to the stations' airtime, and for the stations, Salam Watandar is a reliable source of high-quality international and local news, information, and entertainment programming catering to local audiences and a source of ongoing development support.

Sustaining the stations

For the Afghanistan project, Internews provides support and resources to 37 local radio stations. These stations each have the character of a community station, with a focus on local programming and local participation. Because Afghan media laws until recently restricted holding of broadcast licences to individuals rather than companies or associations, many of the stations in the Internews network are privately owned. However, all the stations in the network have a strong local orientation, report

matters of local concern, and invite community leaders and residents to discuss local issues. Community orientation and participation were and are still central to the Internews project in Afghanistan. Recent changes to the law mean that today stations can be licensed to community associations, which own and manage them.

As part of its sustainability plan, Internews based its selection of stations on three main criteria: assessment of the station's leadership, community focus and engagement, and location and potential audience. To be selected, owners of stations had to demonstrate community support, for example, in the form of donations of land or housing for the station and transmitter, or a local council's pledge to pay some expenses or license fees.

Support for each station included technical advice, broadcast and production studio equipment, portable field recorders and microphones, a 150-watt FM transmitter, a 30-meter tower and a generator to power the station and transmitter during power outages. In addition, Internews provided grants to cover salaries and some operating costs for the first six months, with the size of the grant contingent upon the size and capacity of the station. Internews also continues to provide management, broadcast, and journalism training.

The stations sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), agreeing that Internews retains ownership of the equipment for the initial broadcast period and is obliged to provide technical, training, and other support for 12 months. In return, the stations must comply with quality broadcasting requirements, keep proper financial records, report regularly to Internews, and broadcast Salam Watandar's news and current affairs programs during peak listening hours.

Salam Watandar markets the programs and the stations' airtime to advertisers. The stations receive the programming for free and Salam Watandar pays the stations a percentage of the advertising income to cover airtime used to broadcast the programs.

Sustaining Salam Watandar

Salam Watandar was created as both a production unit and a training unit—targeting a specific information need in the postconflict stabilization period following the war. The intention was to provide news and information tailored to local audiences, and to create local ownership and capacity in Afghanistan's information market.

For Salam Watandar, sustainability is complex and layered. Over the past five years, Salam Watandar has trained and worked with dozens of journalists who are now part of Afghanistan's thriving media scene. In this way, and through the programs it creates and broadcasts, Salam Watandar has contributed to developing and embedding public service media in Afghanistan. The challenge for Salam Watandar is to be able to develop a business model that generates sufficient income to survive as an institution that continues to contribute to developing and promoting media democracy.

Initially, income generation was not a problem. This was so partly because of the 2004 and 2005 elections, for which millions of dollars were spent by the international aid community (USAID, United Nations Development Program, and others) on public outreach and democracy and voter education programming. However, after the elections, this income stream dried up. At the same time, the Afghan media sector—and the competition—was growing, including the emergence of commercial television and additional commercial radio stations.

Salam Watandar is responding to the new situation by stepping up efforts to obtain commercial advertising, with some success. The following table shows the shift from noncommercial (NGO, political development) funding to commercial sources.

Salam Watandar's Income and Expenditure

| Business Earned Directly From | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 |
|-------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| | % | % | % |
| NGOs Community | 97.20% | 44.73% | 18.88% |
| Commercial Sources | 2.80% | 55.27% | 81.12% |
| | 100.00% | 100.00% | 100.00% |

Figures provided by Salam Watandar, June 2008

Income distribution

In accordance with the MoU that Internews signs with its network of stations, Salam Watandar must distribute a percentage of its total income among the network of stations. At present, Salam Watandar's programs are broadcast on 37 stations, including the stations set up with Internews assistance.

Salam Watandar distributes 68% of its total advertising income among the stations. The balance of 32% is split between Salam Watandar (22.7%) and Internews (9.09%) to cover overhead costs.

Salam Watandar uses a simple income distribution system for the stations, dividing them into tiers of large and small stations. Stations with an estimated audience of more than 100,000 people receive a higher percentage of advertising income than those with fewer than 100,000 listeners.

Different expectations

According to Jon Nyswonger, the Internews business planning advisor in Afghanistan, the relationship between Internews and the stations is "finely balanced." He said, "The expectations of the two parties (Internews and the sta-

tions) are different. Internews set up the stations with the aim of them becoming independent and they are—that is, they are expected to build their revenue base in the market and keep the money. But many of the stations seem to believe that Internews should be responsible for ongoing financial support.

"One of the constant battles has been revenue sharing. Stations have asked many times for a greater share of the advertising revenue and Internews has obliged by increasing the percentage that the stations receive. Unfortunately, at the same time as the percentage shared with stations increased, the advertising revenue declined. As a result, the stations were receiving a larger percentage of the pie, but the pie was smaller and stations did not see an increase in the amount of money they received."

The revenue from Salam Watandar provides variable income for the stations that broadcast the programs, but it is difficult for Internews to establish precise numbers, because stations do not regularly provide Internews with

financial information. The absence of information also means that Internews cannot currently say with confidence how many of the stations that it has helped set up are financially sustainable. Internews argues, however, that the fact that the stations are still on the air and still broadcast Salam Watandar and their own programming suggests that they are financially viable.

Access to a limited pool of resources

The unhappiness of some stations with their “slice of the pie” is a concern to both Internews and to Salam Watandar, said Nyswonger. “From the Internews side we would like stations to play the programming they are required to play. In keeping faith with advertisers on the network, we have employed an outside monitoring service to listen to the stations and to report back on what they are playing. The information from the monitoring service shows that occasionally stations are off air or are airing local programming rather than airing the Salam Watandar’s broadcast.”

A “strange and unknown” commercial market

Internews has dedicated significant resources to business development over the years, including international program managers and advisors, international marketing officers, finance personnel, and local station-based business development officers. In a planning document aimed at addressing Salam Watandar’s future, Internews refers to Afghanistan’s “strange and unknown” commercial market and “the ever-changing media environment” and increasing media competitors.² In this document, Internews points to the challenge of identifying accurate pricing for advertising in the absence of accurate monitoring information, the bias towards public information and sponsored programs that are driven by aid and development budget priorities rather than by market

forces, and the nascent local advertising market in smaller cities and towns.

Via the network, Salam Watandar has an estimated audience of 7.5 million people in 22 provinces from 37 radio stations. The stations’ audiences are the keys to Salam Watandar’s sustainability.



Radio listener, Afghanistan. Salam Watandar’s network of 37 stations reaches over 12 million Afghans.

Similarly, the stations depend on Salam Watandar’s ability to secure international and national advertising, which they could not access on their own.

One of the challenges for Salam Watandar is that it is struggling to establish a reliable audience in some major centers. In Kabul, Internews supported the establishment of Radio Watandar, but they do not regularly play Salam Watandar’s programs or advertisements. In Kandahar, Salam Watandar’s partner station broke away from the network and stopped broadcasting the programs.

Lack of an advertising culture

Masood Farivar, manager of Salam Watandar, discussed some of the obstacles that Salam Watandar will have to overcome if it is to become financially sustainable. One of the main problems,

according to Farivar, is the lack of an advertising culture in Afghanistan. “The lack of an advertising culture means there is tough competition for advertising in a limited market. Advertisers do not realize the value of advertising, and do not want to advertise. Advertising is also interesting from the listeners’ point

of view—most viewers couldn’t really distinguish between a TV commercial and a TV program, and they actually watched TV commercials for their content.”

Farivar estimates that about 80%–90% of advertising is by banks, telecommunications companies and construction companies. Businesses are slowly starting to adver-

tise consumer products. “The big guys do realize the value of advertising and will flood the airways, but other commercial advertisers are almost nonexistent. There have been no real attempts to adapt our Western commercial model to the Afghan context. We use the same techniques imported and used by foreign-run media agencies in Kabul. There is some local adaptation in terms of creativity and creative content, but not in the way the airtime is sold.”

Reliance on donors

Farivar is very conscious of Salam Watandar’s dependence on funding from USAID, and he argues that full financial sustainability is not really possible for Salam Watandar. “I would define financial sustainability as Salam Watandar becoming largely independent through advertising revenue, but

not wholly. Salam Watandar is not a commercial radio station; we are more like a nonprofit company. We are not in the business to make money. We take commercial adverts to support our operations but not beyond that.

“While I think it is important to go after every available dollar for Salam Watandar, we should also try to limit that if it compromises our editorial independence. Salam Watandar has complete editorial independence right now. Internews doesn’t interfere with what we put on air, and that is how it has been all along. Content should not be dictated by any sponsor or advertiser. We have to be careful against a back-drop of government agencies and sponsors and advertisers not knowing and respecting the firewall between editorial and business.”

Monitoring the stations

Salam Watandar has contracted an agency to monitor the broadcasting of Salam Watandar programming. “They monitor 20 stations at a time and send us daily, weekly and monthly reports to make sure the partner stations do abide by the MoU, and broadcast the programs uninterrupted,” said Farivar.

This is an expensive operation: “It is very important for us to monitor broadcasts. The monitoring has had a good impact—the stations were not all that diligent broadcasting Salam Watandar. This is another discussion—dealing with the stations, trying to get them to broadcast Salam Watandar regularly—there are some stations that want to slip in local adverts during our peak hour programs, and we have tried to stop that. The big problem is that they are obliged to broadcast during peak hours and they argue that we have taken away from them their golden time, and that this has made it difficult for them to find adverts and air them during off-peak hours.”

Challenging times

Salam Watandar (and the stations on which they air their programs) compete for listeners with Afghan services of international broadcasters, including the BBC, Voice of America (VOA), and Radio Liberty. They also compete with the national broadcaster, Radio-TV Afghanistan, and other local broadcasters with a commercial mandate. A complicating factor is that Salam Watandar has long sought to pitch its programming to less-educated and less-wealthy audiences as part of a public service mandate. Salam Watandar will therefore have to work hard to attract advertisers interested in an audience with disposable income.

At present, Salam Watandar has 25 full-time staff creating programming; two full-time staff working for Tanin, their program distribution unit, and 12 provincial stringers who send in news stories. Although Internews is at present handling the financial management and human resource issues, the long-term plan is for Salam Watandar to take over these functions.

“It is a difficult time, but I like a challenge, a job with a very long job description. My goal is to raise the quality of Salam Watandar content and also to make it stand on its feet, and then I am done with my mission,” said Farivar.

“We have talented people and it is a great program making unit. It is very valuable. At the gathering of station managers I gave a presentation and my message to them was—Internews decided to set up the program unit because local stations do not have resources to produce programs. I demonstrated this with sound clips and they all agreed, and confirmed the value of Salam Watandar. A couple of station managers say when we are on air no one wants to listen to VOA, BBC, and the others. That’s what I get a kick out of because those programs are put together with

millions of dollars and our programs are put together by 25 people.”

ENDNOTES

- 1 From studios in Kabul, the signal is uplinked via the Russian AM-1 satellite to Milan, where it is multiplexed into a DVB (Satellite TV) bouquet and retransmitted on the Hot Bird 6 satellite. Hot Bird 6 reception equipment is cheap and readily available in Afghanistan.
- 2 Internews internal report, *Salam Watandar, Future*. Document provided by Internews Afghanistan in June 2008.

Sustaining the Intercontinental Radio Communication System (SICR)

BY BRUCE GIRARD

The first community radio stations started in Latin America in the 1940s, when Bolivian miners created stations and funded them from their own wages. Today, it is impossible to say accurately how many community stations are broadcasting on the continent; estimates vary from 4,000 to 10,000. One reason why it is so difficult to take a census is that some countries do not yet have legislation that recognizes community radio, so forms of radio vary. The community sector embraces pirate stations, community-oriented commercial stations, religious stations, educational stations, NGO stations, and campus-based stations. Another reason why it is so hard to count stations is that they are vulnerable to repression—numbers ebb and flow depending on the nature of the government in power.

[Networks and associations](#) play an important role in sustainability of individual stations and of whole community radio sectors. Latin America is home to several networks that operate on national, regional, continental, and intercontinental levels. In the following two studies, **Bruce Girard** examines two Latin American networks.

The first study describes the Intercontinental Radio Communication System, which is known by its Spanish acronym, SICR. The SICR is a complex and high-quality program production unit that reaches some 270 stations in Central and South America. How does it do this on a lean budget of US\$250,000 a year?

The second study shows how Peru's national community news and information network, Coordinadora Nacional de Radio (CNR), connects distant and rural communities, reverses the traditional flow of news from the capital to the countryside, and helps finance its members.

The Latin American Association for Radio Education (known as ALER, which is short for *Asociación Latinoamericana de Educación Radiofónica*) was founded in 1972 by eighteen educational radio stations. The stations, all associated with the Catholic Church, were inspired by a model pioneered by *Radio Sutatenza*, the world's first community radio station.

Established by a young Catholic priest in a remote rural community in Colombia in 1947, *Radio Sutatenza* was an educational radio station that focused on teaching formal skills, especially literacy and mathematics. Listeners were organized into informal classes and met in the mornings or evenings at neighborhood houses to listen to the programs and discuss their lessons. *Sutatenza* also broadcast religious programs, but its educational work was what made it stand out, and that eventually led to the creation of dozens of similar stations throughout Latin America.

Like *Radio Sutatenza*, ALER originally promoted formal education and the Catholic Church, but during its almost four decades of history, it has evolved into an association of community radio stations committed to the social, political, and cultural development of the region and to the participation and empowerment of poor and marginalized communities. Perhaps the most important change took place when ALER formally changed its status from an association of “Catholic/Christian” radio

stations to one of “Christian and/or humanist” stations, opening up to stations that shared its social justice goals whether or not they were connected with the Catholic Church.

ALER now has 118 members in 17 Latin American countries, including national community radio associations in the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, El Salvador, Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Paraguay, and Argentina. The association is located Quito, Ecuador, and its 25 staff members concentrate on five strategic projects. In terms of both budget and staff, the Intercontinental Radio Communication System (or SICR, which stands for *Sistema Intercontinental de Comunicación Radiofónica*) is the most important of these strategic projects. The other four strategic projects are:

- The **political communication project** involves an ongoing process of reflection and evaluation of the cultural and political role of each community radio station and network, ensuring the relevance of their objectives and practices.
- Through its focus on **sustainability** ALER helps member stations and networks develop their own social, financial and institutional structures and practices.
- **Training and research** have been key strategic activities since the early days of the association. The area includes a regional network of experts from the region who develop, test, and implement methodologies and course materials.
- **Policy and legislation** that enable free and democratic communication have been identified as a key priority for the region. ALER’s policy work seeks to influence public policies regarding broadcasting, access to information and communication technologies, and the democratization of communication.

SICR has two main components: technological infrastructure and radio production.

Technical infrastructure

At the heart of SICR’s technical infrastructure is a satellite network with ground stations for uplinking programs from nine countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Paraguay, Peru, and Venezuela). The ground stations serve as national content aggregators, delivering programming to the network from the national associations as well as from individual stations.

At the receiving end are 270 satellite receivers in South and Central America. Of these, 120 are part of ALER member stations and networks and the rest are part of nonmember stations.

In addition to its satellite network, SICR makes extensive use of the Internet. SICR programming is available worldwide as a live audio stream from www.aler.org and its principal programs can be downloaded in MP3 format. The Internet is also used by correspondents filing reports and sound bites (actuality) via FTP when they are not able to use one of the satellite uplink stations.

SICR’s production system comprises a network of digital studios with connections to the satellite or the internet. The main production facilities are in ALER’s Quito headquarters, with additional facilities placed in corresponding stations and national community radio associations.

According to ALER, SICR’s network is the largest and most powerful in the region, giving the association and its members unprecedented political and social influence.

Comprehensive coverage through thematic networks

SICR was conceived as a participatory project that would be able to call on the collective knowledge, talent, will, and technical capabilities of a large and diverse team of producers, journalists, correspondents, and others, in Latin America and around the world. These dozens of collaborators are organized into the following specialized networks.

Continental News Network

The oldest and largest of the thematic networks is the Continental News Network (*Red Informativa Continental*). It draws on 50 correspondents in 18 countries to produce three daily editions of its flagship news program, *Contacto Sur* (broadcasting at 7:00 a.m., 12:00 p.m., and 4:00 p.m.), and two weekly news analysis programs, *La Ronda Informativa Latinoamericana* and *Buscando América*.

The Continental News Network is coordinated from Quito, but editorial decisions are decentralized, with correspondents actively participating in structuring the daily news agenda as well as in the network’s ongoing evaluation and planning.

This involvement is one of the network’s strengths. Not only does it make for sound and well-informed editorial decisions, but it also inspires a level of commitment to the project that is essential to its sustainability. SICR does not pay Continental News Network correspondents. Some are employed by ALER member stations; their reports are the members’ contribution to a project to which they are institutionally committed.

Correspondents who are not associated with members volunteer their reports for many practical reasons, such as the training opportunities offered at bi-annual meetings and also because of a personal and political commitment to

the project and a desire to be part of a uniquely Latin American and alternative news service.

Kiechwa Satellite Network

The Kiechwa Satellite Network (Red Kiechwa Satelital) comprises 35 radio producers in Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru. The network's name is a fusion of "Quechua" and "Kichwa," which are indigenous languages with similar roots.¹ Network programming promotes intercultural communication, collaboration, and reflection. The Kiechwa Network is unique in its approach to decentralization. Not only do producers participate in editorial decisions, planning, and evaluation, but every few years the network center moves to a new radio station in one of the three participating countries.

Migration and Communication Network

The Migration and Communication Network (Red Migración y Comunicación) deals with migration in a series of intercontinental and interactive programs. *Callos y Guatita*,² one of the programs produced by this network, is broadcast live simultaneously on several radio stations in Ecuador and Spain. Using satellite audio, audio streaming over the Internet, and the telephone, the program links Ecuadorians at home and in Spain. Topics for discussion include immigrant rights and discrimination as well as providing a forum for exchanging news between resident and diaspora communities. The program has also taken up campaigns, succeeding, for example, in exposing financial institution practices that took more than 20% of the value of the remittances sent by migrants to their families in Ecuador.

Intercultural Amazonian Radio Network

The Amazon region provides the theme and the location of one of the newest networks, the Intercultural Amazonian Radio Network. More than 80 com-

municators from 25 radio stations in 6 countries³ with territory in the remote areas of the Amazon River and the rainforest are involved in the Intercultural Amazonian Radio Network. In addition to continent-wide distribution of cooperatively created productions including news, radio theater, and health campaigns, the Amazon network helps stations develop communication strategies and provides otherwise unavailable training to hundreds of isolated journalists and radio producers.

Special campaigns and events

In cooperation with its members and associations such as AMARC, SICR organizes special coverage of themes and events of particular interest to the region. Special coverage has been extended to global events such as the World Social Forum and to local events with regional impact, including national meetings on communication rights and environmental issues, for example.

SICR also lends its production capacity and infrastructure to national and continental campaigns on a variety of social themes. Special programs and public service announcements are produced, distributed, and broadcast on local stations, often in collaboration with specialized international agencies such as the United Nations Environment Program (UNICEF), or with the support of national development agencies and NGOs.

Secrets to SICR's sustainability

The first secret to SICR's financial sustainability has been to keep its costs down. It is the largest network of its type in the region, with high levels of complexity, quality, productivity, and impact, yet it operates with an annual budget of less than US\$250,000. The key strategy for keeping its budget low is providing a high-quality service specifically tailored to the needs and interests of its members, who in turn freely

contribute the content for hundreds of hours of programming. Without the volunteer contributions of hundreds of radio stations and individuals, SICR's budget would be much higher.

Another important contribution to keeping costs low is SICR's strategic cooperation with the Dutch international broadcaster, Radio Nederland, which has provided free satellite receiving antennas and decoders for 270 Latin American stations, including ALER's 120 members, enabling them to receive SICR and Radio Nederland services for free. Once again the strategy has multiple objectives: not only is SICR able to have more of an impact by making its material available to additional stations, but as the relationships develop, some of them eventually become members of ALER.

Of course, cost reduction is only one part of the equation. Equally important is how the contributions of hundreds of community radio journalists and producers committed to a Latin American and alternative radio network differentiates and adds value to SICR's offering. This content in turn makes it valuable to ALER's members, most of which are small stations with limited production capacity and which count SICR's quality alternative programming as an important contribution to their own sustainability.

Although US\$250,000 is a small amount of money for a radio network of the size and scope of SICR, it is a massive commitment for ALER, accounting for 10 of the 25 staff members working in the Quito office. Fully 85% of SICR's budget is financed by projects from foreign donors. Only 5% comes from member contributions; 10% comes from the sale of production and distribution services. Increasing revenue from production and distribution services, such as producing and distributing audio material for health and human

rights campaigns, has been identified as a priority, but donor support will continue to be essential to SICR's sustainability for years to come.

ALER is committed to SICR for a number of reasons. Among these is the value of the information and communication service's contribution to Latin America's development and democratization. SICR is also appreciated for its contribution to the sustainability of ALER and of its member stations.

As ALER's highest-profile activity, SICR is a constant reminder to funders and members of the value of the association. This translates into more committed members, essential to the sustainability of a membership-based organization, and into funder support for SICR's and ALER's other activities.

For members, SICR is a source of high-quality programming and international news that as individual stations they could not produce. This programming supplements local production, helping stations build and maintain a committed listenership and advertising base.

Peru's CNR: A Decentralized Network

BY BRUCE GIRARD

With a population of 29 million spread out over an area that is twice the size of Germany and that encompasses a coastal desert, the Andes mountain range (with peaks of nearly 7,000 meters), and tropical rainforests, Peru faces enormous communication obstacles. Radio plays a key role in helping to overcome these obstacles. In addition to 2,000 licensed radio stations, there are hundreds of unlicensed broadcasters.

The vast majority of the stations are private and commercial. Most visible among these are a handful of national networks, each sending their centrally produced programming to dozens of repeater stations in the interior of the country. Listeners of these stations know more about the traffic conditions and weather in Lima than about events in their own town.

Turn the dial a little and you'll find hundreds of tiny stations, most little more than a computer hooked up to a transmitter, pumping out a constant fare of cheap music and canned chat. Among this commercial cacophony are about 200 community radio stations that provide local programming to primarily rural audiences. Peru's community stations are diverse, ranging from stations with 20 or more paid staff members broadcasting to entire provinces to entirely volunteer-run stations with signals that do not travel beyond the limits of their tiny village.

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, including 49 radio stations

and 27 production centers that produce programs for broadcast on both member and nonmember stations.

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

Three areas of work

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

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, CNR prioritizes events in the interior. In its decentralized model, CNR member stations produce news and programs that are then sent to Lima and packaged for national distribution. Of the 49 member stations, 22 receive CNR's programming by satellite; most of the rest access it via the Internet.

Programming includes two daily national newscasts, regional newscasts for the north, south, and Amazon regions, a national daily one-hour program of analysis and interviews, a half-hour national sports program, a weekend news

and analysis wrap-up program, a weekly debate program, and 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 programs 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 that the issues of decentralization, poverty, peace, and the environment are present on the national public and political agendas.

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

Finally, in the area of **economic sustainability**, CNR's main activities relate to advertising and production. It sells ads on its own network programming, defraying some of the production costs, and also has an intermediate advertising agency to represent 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.

CNR's intermediate agency was established to respond to a problem faced by community radio stations located outside of major cities—advertisers are located in major cities and they find it easier to buy time on the national networks than on hundreds of small stations. Commercial advertising agencies that represent stations charge exorbitant commissions or simply refuse to represent community radio stations.⁴ As a result, local stations have access only to local advertisers, even though their

listeners would be of interest to national advertisers.

CNR's agency represents a network of more than 100 stations, including both member stations and stations that broadcast the programming of production centers. The agency works with commercial advertisers, but the particular characteristics of CNR's network, including for example stations in remote rural areas with programming in indigenous languages, have made it particularly interesting to government agencies and NGOs running campaigns about health, education, or human rights issues. Most of the revenue goes to the stations, with CNR charging a small commission to maintain the service.

According to CNR, the agency's service is especially valuable because it is run cooperatively with its member stations, giving it a unique ability to provide specialized advice to clients.

Participatory production service

CNR has developed a production service that allows it to harness its expertise in radio production and offer high-quality production of informational, cultural, religious, educational, and commercial programs to a variety of clients. Productions include advertisements, radio theater, documentaries, and complex promotional campaigns.

CNR's production facilities in Lima are supplemented by facilities within member stations in the regions, giving it a unique ability to produce programs in a variety of languages and dialects and to adapt them to local culture, knowledge, and tastes, thus ensuring that programs are meaningful and accepted by local people. As with the services of the advertising agency, CNR's production services are of particular interest to government agencies, NGOs, and other clients with social and developmental objectives.

Bruce Girard is director of the Fundación Comunica in Uruguay and has more than 20 years' experience with community and alternative media as a producer, activist, trainer, and researcher. He helped set up the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) and founded Latin America's first Internet-based radio news service, Púlsar. He has published numerous books, articles, and reports about community media.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Quechua is spoken in Peru and Bolivia and Kichwa in Ecuador. Although an estimated 10 million people in the region speak one of the languages, the Kichwa Network is unique in its transcultural nature.
- 2 The program's name refers to traditional tripe dishes from Spain (callos) and Ecuador (guatita). For more information on the program, see "Callos and Guatita: radio and migration in Ecuador and Spain," by Luis Dávila and José Manuel López, in Girard, Bruce, *The One to Watch*, FAO, Rome, 2003. Available for download from comunica.org/1-2-watch/html/download.htm.
- 3 The countries are Peru, Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia, Brazil, and Venezuela.
- 4 The problem is almost universally experienced by community radio stations outside of major cities. In South Africa, for example, intermediate agencies take a minimum 35% commission, occasionally running as high as 65%. Small, under-resourced and often inexperienced, community radio stations are at the mercy of intermediate agencies.

Small Towns Find a Voice Online

BY PERSEPHONE MIEL

The digital media age is fundamentally changing how news and information are created, disseminated, and consumed in the United States and around the world. New tools and platforms have fuelled a decade of explosive growth in online media created by people who are not communications professionals. Ordinary people share their comments, writings, and increasingly, their photos, audio, and video, in formats often indistinguishable from those used by well-funded professional media.

The reporting of these “citizen journalists” has uncovered political scandals, as in the allegedly political U.S. attorney firings and brought events like the 2008 protests in Burma to the attention of the world. It has also offered a new way for small communities that lack any kind of professional media to create online media platforms for local news and information. These websites, increasingly common in the developed world, serve many of the same functions as community radio stations and other community media in other countries. **Persephone Miel** discusses online community media and their business models.

The phenomenal growth of online “participatory” media is, in the United States, usually associated with partisan political invective and heated discussions of celebrity gossip. However, there is also a small but significant number of groups using the new technologies to provide news and information to local communities, much of it created by community members themselves.

These sites, of which there are likely a few thousand across the country, cover city council and school board meetings, promote local businesses, and offer residents the opportunity to discuss everything from politics to gardening tips. Some are run by a single dedicated volunteer; others have blossomed into medium-sized businesses with dozens of employees.

Defining community media in a crowded online space

As there is no government or other accrediting body in the United States conferring any particular status on news websites of any kind and no specific association or membership organization, there is no official definition of online

community media sites. However, they are easily distinguished from social networking sites, also called “social media,” (Facebook, MySpace, Friendster, and the like), which are focused on connecting people, regardless of their geography, for the purpose of social interaction. Community news sites are a subset of “participatory media,” also commonly called “user-generated content.” Their distinguishing feature is a focus on serving a community that is defined by geography rather than social links, or shared interests or identities, like the myriad sites serving parents, sports fans, or video gamers.

An example of a well-established and successful community news site in the United States is the Forum (www.forumhome.org), which serves the towns of Deerfield, Nottingham, Candia, and Northwood (combined population of about 16,000 residents) in the state of New Hampshire. Founded in 2005 as a cooperative with seed funding from a foundation grant and the local library, business advice from a local businessman, and pro bono legal aid, the Forum focuses on local news and activities. The site includes reader-contributed news, fiction, poetry, photographs, cartoons,

The Forum's mission statement

The mission of *The Philbrick-James Forum* is to provide a source for news and current information, and an outlet for the sharing of events, opinion, and creative expression through an interactive web-based newspaper supplemented by periodic print issues. An easily accessible source of information and a venue for input by the citizenry will encourage community involvement and identity.

The Forum's pledge:

- To report the news with accuracy and objectivity, and treat people with respect.
- To provide content to help citizens make informed decisions about local issues.
- To facilitate community debate.
- To furnish an opportunity for creative expression.
- To correct our errors in a timely manner

The Forum's contributors

We are volunteers of all ages. We are long-term residents and newcomers, employed and retired, politically active and apolitical, churchgoers and atheists. What unites us is our dedication to creating a means for open communication with and about our community.

We would love your help with this project. Contact news@forumhome.org if you are interested in helping with the work.

and opinion pieces; anyone can contribute, as long as their submissions abide by simple editorial guidelines.

The Forum was founded in 2005 by former teacher Maureen Mann and several other residents she met through political activity. The group shared an interest in creating a nonpartisan, unbiased, and timely source of local news. The local news void became apparent in February 2004, when the local school newsletter, which doubled as the community bulletin, published the procedure for running in municipal elections a full month *after* the deadline to register had passed. Meanwhile, of the 22 local offices open, there were eight for which no one was running at all.

With two part-time paid editors organizing the contributions of a large number of volunteer authors, and one advertising salesperson, the Forum is a low-budget nonprofit relying on a mix of volunteer labor, small grants and donations, and sales of local ads. In response to requests from readers and advertisers, the Forum began “reverse-publishing,” issuing a paper publication based on the online content a few times a year. The paper is distributed to local residents for free, by mail.

Although many community websites have goals and structures similar to the Forum, they are far from organized movements. As a small but much-heralded piece of the citizen journalism movement, they have been fêted by journalism foundations, new media conferences like WeMedia, university-based research centers, and nonprofit support organizations. These centers, many of them funded by the Knight Foundation, offer to a significant core of community news sites the basic functions of an association.

Because of the blurring of definitions, there is a range of terms used by community-focused sites to refer to themselves: the most common terms are

community news sites, citizen media, hyperlocal media, and placeblogs. In addition, there are thousands more casual individual bloggers who define their focus as something other than the community or their purpose as primarily personal, and do not associate themselves with the citizen news groups, yet cover local issues with some regularity.

Other community media founders like Barry Parr, who has built up the Coastsider (www.coastsider.com) in his spare time to report on happenings in his coastal California town, keep their distance from the grant-funded groups, believing that a commercial model will eventually reward their efforts. Coastsider has grown from a site featuring one person's writing to include regular submissions from community members and substantial information on local events.

History of online community media

Most online community sites in the United States were started in the past few years by people who previously had no involvement in community media (although an astonishing number of sites have been created by one-time professional journalists from the mainstream media). However, various pre-Internet forms of community media, including low-power FM radio, community access cable TV, and municipal newsletters and other community publications, have also added online components. Cambridge Community Television (www.cctvcambridge.org) in Massachusetts has developed an extensive web presence to encourage additional community participation.¹

Professional public broadcasting in the United States is also experimenting with many new forms of online media, but has usually chosen to create its own projects to solicit viewer and listener contributions rather than reach out to existing community-created media.

Despite the seeming alignment of their public service mission, the cultural divide between the amateur online media movement and the public broadcasting community means that it is unlikely that local public radio and TV stations will become a source of support for community sites that could benefit from their journalistic and technical expertise. The Forum, in New Hampshire, is based a mere 30 miles (48 km) from the studios of New Hampshire Public Radio, which has a strong interest in participatory online media. Yet, three years after the website was launched, the leaders of the two organizations had never met to discuss possible cooperation.

These media are a natural outgrowth of the “civic journalism” (also called “public journalism”) movement, which gained popularity in the early 1990s and aimed to make journalism more responsive to the public. Civic journalism was meant to be less obsessed with neutrality and objectivity and more willing to promote civic engagement. These goals fed into the explosion of what is usually called “citizen journalism.” For citizen journalists, the possibilities offered by digital media creation tools, especially the software that launched the blog format, meant that instead of lobbying their local newspaper to listen to the community, they themselves could create the kind of media they considered to be lacking.

In July 2008, Professor Jay Rosen of New York University (NYU), a long-time promoter of citizen journalism, published a short post on his influential blog *pressthink* (www.pressthink.org), attempting to define the term once and for all:

A Most Useful Definition of Citizen Journalism

It’s mine, but it should be yours. Can we take the quote marks off now? Can we remove the “so-called” from in front? When the people formerly known as the audience employ the press tools they have in their possession to inform one another, that’s citizen journalism.

— Jay Rosen, www.pressthink.org, July 2008²

The broadest definitions of participatory media include the appearance of millions of individual blogs devoted to personal narratives, hobbies, culture, politics, celebrity gossip, and technology, among many other topics. Among these, sites appeared that were specifically dedicated to covering local events. Some of these, like H2Otown (www.H2Otown.info), in Watertown, Massachusetts, were created by a single local resident frustrated by the lack of traditional media or its poor quality, but feature contributions by any number of volunteer local authors. Others, like Baristanet (www.baristanet.com), based in suburban New Jersey, are primarily written by the founder(s)—in this case two former journalists—based on input and tips submitted by readers.

Grant support and support centers

As these sites multiplied, the Knight Foundation and other groups launched programs to support online citizen journalism, usually with small grants to help launch publications or upgrade technical facilities. A number of resource centers appeared, mostly within universities that study the citizen journalism phenomenon and offer various kinds of support to citizen media outlets, from technical and legal advice to training in journalism and multimedia production. The best known of these is J-Lab (www.j-lab.org).

J-Lab’s mission is to help “journalists and citizens use digital technologies to develop new ways for people to participate in public life with projects on innovations in journalism, citizen media, interactive news stories, entrepreneurship, training, and research and publications.” (www.j-lab.org). As part of its extensive resources for online community media, J-Lab maintains a directory of citizen news sites around the country. As of February 2009, there were 795 sites in the database—and J-Lab says that the list is far from exhaustive.

Another Knight-supported project, launched by H2Otown founder Lisa Williams, offers connections and advice to the makers of “placeblogs,” which the site defines as follows: “A placeblog is an act of sustained attention to a particular place over time. It can be done by one person, a defined group of people, or in a way that’s open to community contribution. It’s not a newspaper, though it may contain random acts of journalism. It’s about the lived experience of a place.”

Although these placebloggers tend not to see themselves as journalists or as necessarily serving the community, many of them do provide similar functions. In an unusual example, the Flint Expatriates blog (www.flintexpats.com) by



Flint Expatriates is written in San Francisco by and for former residents of Flint, Michigan. The site features a logo contributed by a loyal reader. www.flintexpats.com

San Francisco-based journalist Gordon Young, reports from afar on events in the depressed town of Flint, Michigan. A small but dedicated group of former and current residents of the town uses the site to keep up with their beloved hometown. Young, who makes his living as a freelance journalist and says the site is “a labor of love,” would love to be able to devote more time to the project. Using the popular online payments service Paypal, Young asks readers to make donations of any size in order to allow him to turn down some of his other work and spend more time on the site. As of this writing, he had raised just over \$300, but his enthusiasm for the project remained undiminished.

For placeblogs and community news sites that—like the Forum—were born to fill an information vacuum in small communities not previously covered by traditional media, the lack of competition means that these media have the luxury of defining their success on their community’s own terms. The first challenge for these sites is to create an entity that can be sustained by the community. This sustenance takes many forms: social reinforcement, volunteer labor, donations, subscriptions, local advertising, or even municipal funding.

Online media business models

Just as there is a wide variety of online sites serving communities, there is no single business model that is common to such sites. With a wealth of free self-publishing tools and platforms, no equipment and no capital investment are required—just Internet access and free time. A new blog can be launched quite literally in minutes and maintained from any Internet-connected computer, including a public-access terminal in a library or Internet café.

The most clearly defined group of community news sites is those in the J-Lab database, which share a focus on not

only covering an area but on serving the community and including community participation in some way. The J-Lab database includes community site owners’ answers to a few basic survey questions, giving a sense of the typical structures. Of the sites that answered a question about their business model, 54% defined themselves as “for-profit,” 38% chose “informal,” and just over 7% checked “nonprofit.”

At the same time, it is clear from J-Lab’s narrative reports and personal interviews that for most sites, the for-profit designation is a convenient legal structure, but not the primary motivation of the sites. Only half of the sites reported having any paid staff at all and most of those are likely part-time. Many of the sites use only the Google Ads service, which feeds simple text ads to the site based on the words in each page, paying fractions of pennies for each time readers click on the links offered. Others have salespeople to solicit local advertising. In either case, the tiny audiences for these sites means that even the most successful of them are unlikely to be taking in more than a couple of thousands of dollars a month in advertising revenue, with many making far less than that.

Editorial structures

Although the overwhelming majority of authors contributing to these community sites are not paid for their efforts, a surprising 63% of the sites in the J-Lab survey said they had some professional journalists involved. Some sites launched by former journalists, like the *New Haven Independent* (newhaven-independent.org) in New Haven, Connecticut, and the *Chi-Town Daily News* (www.chitowndailynews.org) in Chicago, Illinois, stress journalism principles and edit everything that is published. Other sites are open to contributions from all comers, seeking only to avoid legal hassles or poisonous rhetoric and

featuring a very personal style of writing and a positive gloss on local businesses.

Legal issues

Despite the lack of barriers in the United States to launching online publications, citizen journalists have come to realize that even seemingly innocuous topics can lead to conflict and legal problems. The Citizen Media Law Project offers citizen journalists of all kinds, including many community-oriented sites, the kind of legal advice and support that professional journalists in media institutions rely on to avoid lawsuits. The Center provides both online resources and personalized advice on legal issues like libel and defamation. Recently the Center expanded its work to help citizen media make important decisions on how to register, whether as a business or nonprofit organization, in order to minimize liability. Because U.S. laws on both corporate registration and journalistic issues like libel are made locally, this required the establishment of a detailed state-by-state guide. The Center’s staff also blog interesting legal cases involving citizen media.

Top-down and commercial forms

Even though there are few examples of small local sites as profitable enterprises, the frantic attempts to figure out how to make money online have led many large traditional media outlets to jump on the hyperlocal bandwagon, using their websites to offer audiences the ability to get and contribute to news at the neighborhood level. *The Washington Post’s* much-touted experiment with a separate site to serve a neighboring county (www.LoudounExtra.com) was eventually deemed a “hyperlocal flop,”³ but the company continues to experiment with ways to offer readers community-level information. In New Orleans, the *Times-Picayune’s* site hosts discussion forums (www.nola.com/forums/) for more than three dozen separate districts in its coverage area, though the level of



In New Orleans, the Times-Picayune's site hosts discussion forums (www.nola.com/forums/) for more than three dozen separate districts in its coverage area. Participation varies depending on the issues being discussed.

activity and the amount of accompanying news coverage is quite variable.

Challenges facing online media

Although there is no question that many online community media outlets in the United States are serving real needs in their communities, they remain fragile. The most successful community news sites tend to serve relatively homogeneous, relatively well-off communities; examples of sites serving less privileged or more diverse populations are rarer.

Also, though some sites thrive based on the writing talents of their main authors, others badly want to improve the quality of their work by training their contributors in reporting or journalism production skills. Finally, though few of the participants are motivated primarily by money, many groups are experiencing volunteer fatigue and feeling pressure to find more reliable sources of financial support.

The clearest determinant of the success of online community news sites in the United States seems to be the

ability of the organization to identify and meet a strong need for information. In the developing world, there are already many examples where—despite limited Internet access and many other barriers—extreme information deficits caused by disaster, conflict or repression have led to the rapid, innovative, and successful use of digital media tools by local communities.⁴ As technology—in particular, systems for the distribution of news to mobile phones—becomes more common and less expensive, it is likely that digitally networked forms of community media will spread in the developing world.

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Resources

- Center for Future Civic Media www.civic.mit.edu
- Citizen Media Center www.citmedia.org
- Citizen Media Law Project www.citmedialaw.org
- Global Voices www.globalvoicesonline.org
- J-Lab www.j-lab.org
- Knight Foundation www.knightpulse.org
- Knight Digital Media Center (USC Annenberg) www.knightdigitalmediacenter.org
- Media Re:public www.mediarpublic.us
- Placeblogger www.placeblogger.com
- Pressthink www.pressthink.org

ENDNOTES

- 1 Increasing numbers of community media organizations in developing countries are also setting up websites to reach international audiences.
- 2 journalism.nyu.edu/pubzone/weblogs/pressthink/2008/07/14/a_most_useful_d.html
- 3 online.wsj.com/article/SB121253859877343291.html?mod=yahoo_hs
- 4 See the Burning Bridge blog for some examples. www.ivonotes.wordpress.com

Guide to resources / further reading / websites

| Geographic focus | Resource | Author and source | Date published | Summary |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|----------------|--|
| Guides & Manuals | | | | |
| Afghanistan | Afghan Women's Hour: Reporting health, rights and gender issues | BBC World Service Trust www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/trust/news/2008/04/080404_news_resources_awh.shtml | January 2006 | Practical guide for journalists on radio programs made by women in Afghanistan for the BBC World Service trust, containing interview techniques and journalism skills. |
| Africa | Live News Africa: A Survival Guide for Journalists. | Published by International News Safety Institute International Press Centre www.newssafety.com/index.php?view=article&catid=314%3Apress-room-news-release&id=3808%3Alive-news-africa-a-survival-guide-for-journalists&option=com_content&Itemid=100077 | 2007 | A Survival Guide for Journalists, designed to help journalists to prepare themselves mentally, physically, and psychologically for potentially dangerous assignments. |
| Africa | The African Community Radio Station Manager's Handbook | AMARC Nick Ishmael Perkins | 2005 | The key section on financial sustainability is the business plan outline, which provides guidance on planning income and expenditure. |
| Africa—Mozambique | Gender-Sensitive Reporting Guide | UNESCO www.mediamoz.com/gender/Gender_course.pdf | 2008 | Practical guide for reporters on gender-sensitive reporting and tackling gender issues. |
| Africa—South Africa | A Sense of Belonging, Community Radio, and Civil Society | John van Zyl—ABC/Ulwazi www.abculwazi.org.za/files/senseofbelonging.pdf | 2005 | Examines the role that community radio plays in building an effective civil society. Explores the value of community radio and highlights the importance of the community radio sector for the consolidation of local government, the growth of democracy, and the rebuilding of civil society. |
| Africa—South Africa | Community Radio Manual | Open Society Foundation for South Africa www.osf.org | 2002 | Guide to setting up a community radio station, covering mission, advertising, programming, and research. |
| Africa—South Africa | Curriculum for training community radio station managers | Benita Pavlicevic Open Society Foundation for South Africa www.osf.org | June 1999 | Has sections on financial management and raising funds. |
| Africa—South Africa (International) | Community Radio Technical Manual | Martin Sims—Open Society Foundation for SA/National Community Radio Forum | 2002 | Basic studio design, operations, and maintenance. |
| Africa—Southern / Eastern | Developing Radio Partners: Guidebook on Sustainability | Bill Siemering and Jean Fairbairn www.developingradiopartners.org | 2006 | By presenting studies of six local independent radio stations, the authors propose a different understanding of sustainability. The studies highlight different factors, including context, leadership, management, partnerships, programming, human and technical capacity, will, community support, audience research, and many others, and show how they work together to contribute to the overall sustainability of stations. |

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| Africa—Southern Africa | Financial Sustainability Model for Community Radio in Southern Africa | SAIMED Soulbeat website or www.comminit.com/en/node/189522 | 2007 | Presents a financial sustainability model developed by the Southern Africa Institute for Media Entrepreneurship Development (SAIMED). Aims to assist community radio stations in Southern Africa to become financially sustainable from inception. This model is based on research conducted in Namibia in 2002 among six community radio stations. |
| India | Community Radio in India: Step by Step | United Nations Development Program (UNDP) man.comunica.org/archives/40 | 2004 | Information on community radio in India, legal guidelines, technology issues, sustainability issues, field experiences, and so on. |
| India | How to Do Community Radio | Louie Tabling UNESCO. Published by (UNESCO), Asia-Pacific Bureau for Communication and Information. portal.unesco.org/ci/en/files/17593/11014593681Com_radio.pdf/Com_radio.pdf | 2002 | A manual for community radio operators. Goes through concepts and practice of community radio, equipment, the community and radio council, ethics and codes of conduct, securing a broadcast license, and community radio programming. Includes a chapter on managing finances and sustainability of a community radio, citing several pointers to help achieve successful finance generation and management. |
| International | Fundraising for People-Powered Community Radio | prometheusradio.org/content/view/158/145/ | 2008 | A guide to fundraising. Includes various creative tips about different options to raise funds, such as grants, events, and underwriting. |
| International | Community Radio Start-Up Information Guide | Karina Barker, Farm Radio International www.farmradio.org/english/partners/resources/community-radio-start-up-guide_e.pdf | April 2008 | Provides a list of resources useful to community radio, covering legal and funding issues, selecting equipment, management, and broadcasting. |
| International | Community Radio Handbook | Colin Fraser and Sonia Restrepo Estrada, UNESCO www.unesco.org/webworld/publications/community_radio_handbook.pdf | 2001 | Provides a detailed description of the steps involved in setting up a community radio station, and case studies from around the world. Sections on sustainability that particularly highlight outside funding and issues of legislation and advertising. This handbook provides a list of possible options that can be used to raise revenue to cover day-to-day costs, including advertising, sponsorship, donations, membership fees, and others. |
| International | Fundraising | Prometheus Radio Project prometheusradio.org/media/pdf/KYRS_Fundraising_Handbook.pdf | 2007 | A guide to fundraising. Includes various creative tips about different options to raise funds, such as grants, events, and underwriting. Although this guide is written for an American audience, the information may be adaptable to fit other communities. |
| International | Community Radio: The People's Voice | John Van Zyl www.abculwazi.org.za/jsp/ABC_Ulwazi.jsp | 2003 | Written for a South African audience, but much of its content can be adapted to fit other countries. Handbook is divided into six chapters: What Is Community Radio?, Why Human Rights Are Essential, Managing a Community Radio Station, What Community Radio Journalism Involves, Why Production Is the Heart and Soul of Community Radio!, and How to Make Your Community Radio Station Self-Sustainable. |

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| International | A Handbook for Telecenter Staffs | Royal D. Colle and Raul Roman Cornell University www.ip.cals.cornell.edu/commdev/handbook.cfm | 2003 | Provides an overview of many factors that may come into play in the planning and daily functioning of a telecenter for community development; a self-learning tool and management guide for telecenter staffs; <i>also</i> a reference resource to guide the reader toward a future search for additional educational materials. . . ; <i>therefore</i> a reference tool for organizations involved in telecenter development, or as a guide for trainers of telecenter staffs. The Handbook is organized into ten modules. |
| Evaluations, research reports | | | | |
| Africa | Analysis: Looking at Community Radio in Africa | Mike Hickcox www.umc.org/site/c.gjTJbMUluE/b.1857989/k.4B88/Analysis_Looking_at_community_radio_in_Africa.htm | June 2006 | A report by the director of radio and audio ministries, United Methodist Communications, that looks specifically at the contribution of UMC in sustaining community media in Africa. |
| Africa | Towards an African E-Index: Household and Individual ICT Access in 10 Countries Across Africa | www.researchictafrica.net | 2005 | Takes a comparative perspective of ICT usage across 10 African countries and reflects on the values of ICT usage in financial sustainability. |
| Africa—South Africa | The People's Voice: The Development and Current State of the African Small Media Sector. | Adrian Hadland, Karen Thorne www.hrcpublishers.ac.za | 2004 | Provides an overview of participants, policies, opportunities and challenges facing the small media sector in South Africa currently. |
| Africa—Sudan | The State of Media in Sudan | CIMA, Spencer Hayne www.ned.org/cima/cima-sudan_report.pdf | September 2007 | Training for journalists, the development of self sustaining media outlets, support from international organizations, and efforts to bring about change through, among other things, full implementation of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, can lead to significant improvements in Sudan and provide tremendous benefits to the people, including increased access to information. |
| Africa—Madagascar | The Contribution of Radio Broadcasting to the Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals In Southern Madagascar | Leo Metcalf, Nicola Harford, Mary Myers, DFID www.andrewelestrust.org/radio.htm | January 2007 | Evaluation of Andrew Lees Trust's Project Radio. Looks at ALT/PR's methods and organization and finds many advantages to its particular three-way process of working. |
| Papua New Guinea | Yu Tok Radio | World Bank siteresources.worldbank.org/INTEAPREGTOPSOCDEV/Resources/502632-1163365702511/PNG_YuTokRadio_report.pdf | | Case study of the World Bank–initiated Youth Community Radio as a part of the Youth Outreach Project. |
| Afghanistan | Evaluation of USAID assistance to the Radio sector in Afghanistan | USAID http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PDADF383.pdf | October 2005 | Looks at how far USAID goals have been met in Afghanistan. |
| International | ICTS and Large-Scale Poverty Reduction | Panos London (SDC / IICD) www.panos.org.uk/PDF/reports/ICT_poverty.pdf | 2005 | Studies of ICT contribution in different countries and contexts. Useful for ICTS and community sustainability. |

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| International | Broadcasting, Voice, and Accountability | Steve Buckley, Kreszentia Duer, Toby Mendel, Seán O' Siochrú, with Monroe E. Price and Mark Raboy, World Bank, Washington www.digitalculture.org/broadcasting.html | 2008 | Deals with the importance of the policy, legal, and regulatory framework that influences the shape, content, and social impacts of the broadcasting sector as a whole. |
| International | U.S. Public and Private Funding of Media Development | CIMA (Center for International Media Assistance) NED (National Endowment for Democracy). www.ned.org/cima/CIMA-Community_Radio-Working_Group_Report.pdf | December 2007 | Report based on results of a survey conducted by CIMA of public and private media sector funders and implementers, interviews, and a review of literature. |
| International | Community Communications: The Role of Community Media in Development | UNESCO Frances J. Berrigan http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0004/000440/044035eo.pdf | 1979 | Defines development in the context of community media, dealing both with rural and urban development. |
| International | Media Assistance Challenges and Opportunities for the Professional Development of Journalists | CIMA (Center for International Media Assistance) NED (National Endowment for Democracy) www.ned.org/cima/CIMA-Professional_Development-Working_Group_Report.pdf | July 2007 | Examines the different aspects of training local journalists, and the interaction between this training and the donors. |
| International | Scaling a Changing Curve: Traditional Media Development and the New Media | CIMA (Center for International Media Assistance)/NED (National Endowment for Democracy) www.ned.org/cima/CIMA-New_Media-Report.pdf | March 2008 | Through an examination of the use of ICT in independent media development, sheds light on the state of current practice with respect to media development and new technologies. |
| International | Independent Media's Vital Role in Development | Peter Graves CIMA (Center for International Media Assistance) NED (National Endowment for Democracy) www.ned.org/cima/CIMA-Investigative_Journalism_Report.pdf | December 2007 | To demonstrate the importance of fostering independent media, provides examples of how access to information has transformed political, economic, and social systems. It shows what can happen when conditions allow independent media to operate and flourish. Section on Media and the Economy. The author frames this discussion in figures on mergers and value of media. He describes the high market value of linking people with one another to share information, stating that information at the core of commerce fuels economic growth through open markets governed by transparent pricing. The author observes that the widespread use of technology, including among the economically poor, has resulted in media expansion to serve the interests of a wider spectrum of economic classes. |
| International | The Role of Media Support Organizations and Public Literacy in Strengthening Independent Media Worldwide | Ann C. Olson CIMA (Center for International Media Assistance)/NED (National Endowment for Democracy) www.ned.org/cima/CIMA-Media_Support_Organizations_and_Media_Literacy-Report.pdf | February 2008 | Studies the relationship between funders and local journalists, and the importance of donors supporting media literacy programs; lays out certain frameworks that donors should keep in mind when funding independent media projects. |

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| International | Media Law Assistance: Establishing and Enabling an Environment for a Free and Independent Media to Flourish | CIMA (Center for International Media Assistance)/NED (National Endowment for Democracy www.ned.org/cima/CIMA-Legal_Enabling_Environment-Working_Group_Report.pdf | May 2007 | Studies the relation between media law development, government and private donors, criteria for media development, and building up of information and resources. |
| International | Towards Economic Sustainability of the Media in Developing Countries | CIMA (Center for International Media Assistance)/NED (National Endowment for Democracy CIMA www.ned.org/cima/CIMA-Economic_Sustainability-Working_Group_Report.pdf | June 2007 | Examines several aspects of financial sustainability, such as public service and consumer-centric media, situation-specific programs, business skills, media beyond democratization, and increased awareness. |
| International | Empowering Independent Media: U.S. Efforts to Foster Free and Independent Media Around the World | CIMA (Center for International Media Assistance)/NED (National Endowment for Democracy www.ned.org/cima/CIMA-Empowering_Independent_Media.pdf | 2008 | CIMA's 2008 Inaugural Report provides an in-depth assessment of U.S. international media development efforts, both public and private, and calls upon future efforts to be more long-term, comprehensive, and needs-driven. Section on media sustainability—key recommendations are increasing training in management, advertising and market research, finding entrepreneurial local partners, making available low-interest loans, and developing the advertising market |
| International | Community Radio: Its Impact and Challenges to Development | CIMA (Center for International Media Assistance)/NED (National Endowment for Democracy. www.ned.org/cima/CIMA-Community_Radio-Working_Group_Report.pdf - | October 2007 | Examines the impact of independent media, and the importance of financial sustainability, as well as other factors, such as geography, that affect its working. |
| International | Gender and ICTs | BRIDGE, IDS, Sussex www.bridge.ids.ac.uk/reports/CEP-ICTs-OR.pdf | September 2004 | New technologies in the information and communications arena, especially the Internet, have been seen as ushering in a new age. There is a mainstream view that such technologies have only technical, rather than social, implications. The dramatic positive changes brought in by these information and communication technologies (ICTs), however, have not touched all of humanity. Existing power relations in society determine the enjoyment of benefits from ICTs; hence these technologies are not gender-neutral. |
| International | The Economic Impact of Telecommunications on Rural Livelihoods and Poverty Reduction: A Study of Rural Communities in India (Gujarat), Mozambique, and Tanzania | DFID, Commonwealth Telecommunications Organization http://www.ictportal.org.za/documents/d00004/1-CTO-Study_Econ_Telephony_Oct2005.pdf | November 2005 | Looks at the impact of telephones on rural livelihoods. |
| International | Journalism 3G: The Impact of Technology in the Field | Georgia Tech, College of Computing www.cc.gatech.edu/events/cnj-symposium | N.A. | Explores the intersection of computing and journalism. |
| Europe (Central and Eastern) | Evaluation of the USAID professional media program in Central and Eastern Europe | USAID, Dan De Luce ics.leeds.ac.uk/papers/pmt/exhibits/1481/PNACR756.pdf | September 2003 | Looks at how far the goals of USAID in Central and Eastern Europe have been fulfilled, includes USAID grants for the creation of a private media sector, emphasizing financial independence as the key to media independence. |

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| Comparative: Africa, Central America | Media for Sustainable Development Content Survey: A baseline study report on sustainable development content/themes of community radio stations in Africa and Central America | Panos and AMARC amarcwiki.amarc.org/upload/documents/M4SDStudyMay04I.pdf | May 2004 | This report concludes that investigations conducted through the study of different radio stations indicate that in general, community radio stations are still struggling with producing content on sustainable development. One of the reasons is the lack of understanding and distinction of what sustainable development content is, especially in the specific context of the different communities. Findings also indicate that despite challenges, community radio stations are making some efforts to produce programs on sustainable development, although they are also faced with challenges to identifying and working with stakeholders for content development. |
| Europe/Eastern and Central | Sustainable Journalism Training in Central and Eastern Europe | www.jeffersoninst.org | June 2007 | Argues that democratization can be possible only through strong, independent media; report looks at the contribution of training to creating sustainable strong, independent media/journalism. |
| Books, papers, articles | | | | |
| Africa—South Africa | Community Voices Over a Decade | Jean Fairbairn/Open Society Foundation for SA | 2005 | History, workings of OSF-SA community radio support program. |
| Africa | Transforming the Mediascape in South Africa: The Continuing Struggle to Develop Community Radio | eprints.qut.edu.au | 2002 | As a new democracy, South Africa's adoption of community radio is significant on a global scale. It can be said to have more progressive broadcasting policies than other long established democracies. But the sector, despite its rapid growth, is struggling. This paper considers community radio in South Africa as an example of "citizens' media" that is transforming the country's mediascape. It draws on interviews undertaken in South Africa during late 2001 to discuss the problems that the sector is facing. The role of legislation and regulation is considered, as well as an example of a community radio station that serves a severely disadvantaged community. Social and economic underdevelopment in historically disadvantaged communities is seen as a major problem and an example of an initiative that seeks to develop such communities through community radio is described. |
| Africa- South Africa | Community Radio—Participatory Communication in Post-Apartheid South Africa | Anthony A. Olorunnisola www.personal.psu.edu/faculty/a/x/axo8/Joburg/manuscript.htm | May 2002 | Evaluates the evolution of community radio in post-apartheid South Africa, where a three-tier broadcasting system—public, commercial, and community—has replaced the monopoly of a state-run behemoth, the South African Broadcasting Corporation. |
| Africa—South Africa | Community Radio: The People's Voice | Sharp Sharp Media, Jhb 2003 Edited by Prof. John van Zyl www.abculwazi.org.za/files/crIntroduction | | Chapter 6 on Sustainability |
| Australia | Community Radio in the Prosumer Era. | www.cbonline.org.au/3cmedia/3c_issue3/BarryERennie.pdf | 2007 | This paper takes SYN (a community radio licensee in Melbourne) as a case study and employs media ethnography and policy analysis to identify contemporary challenges facing community media. Community media requires a different approach to convergence than that which is commonly. |

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| India | When India Gets Going | Piya Kochhar www.thehoot.org/web/home/story.php?storyid=2966&pg=1&mod=1&sectionId=3&valid=true | 2008 | Interview with Steve Buckley on the potential of community media in India, where he defines community radio thoroughly; though he does not talk much about sustainability, he envisages what the potential for community radio in India. |
| Nepal | What Is Community Radio? | nepal.asiapacific.amarc.org/site.php?lang=EN | 2008 | Focus on Nepal—contains a number of definitions by AMARC Nepal. |
| Nepal | Ten Years On: The State of Community Radio in Nepal | UNESCO, Ian Pringle, Bikram Subba http://portal.unesco.org/geography/en/files/7991/11966615215State_of_Community_Radio_in_Nepal_abridged.pdf/State+of+Community+Radio+in+Nepal_abridged.pdf | 2007 | Finds that although all the community radios that have started in the past 10 years are still on air, long-term sustainability, especially given current trends, remains, at worst uncertain, and at best an ongoing challenge for the vast majority of stations. The durability of the existing community stations likely has much to do with the social capital they derive from being “community” stations; however, as more stations go on air, including multiple community radios in the same listening area, and as more stations slip into market competition, they risk losing their social and organizational footing. For the majority of community stations, investments in social capital, rather than competing for commercial advertising through more marketable programming or higher transmission power, appear to be the best route to overall sustainability. |
| India | Building Community Radio Links in India: BBC World Service Trust | www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/trust/developmentcommunications/story/2007/01/070123_india_radio_trip.shtml | 2007 | Highlights the role of women and activist media from the grassroots in their contribution to community media. |
| International | The WSIS as a Political Space in Global Media Governance | Marc Raboy Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies, Vol. 18 | 2004 | The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) WSIS has opened a new phase in global communication governance and global governance generally. Through a particular mix of official and parallel activities, the process identified the problematic issues in global communication, indicated the range of views on how to deal with them, provided various blueprints of what should and could be possible in the way of solutions, and gingerly explored ways of dealing with these questions in the future. This paper examines some of these issues within the changing framework of global governance. |
| International | Radio, Democracy and Development: Evolving Models of Community Radio | William Siemering | 2000 | Although community radio has a long history in South and North America, new models are evolving in other parts of the world, from South Africa to Central Eurasia. True to community roots, stations reflect the unique history, culture, and political climate of each country. |
| International | Broadcasting and Development | Carter Eitzroth, Charles Kenny, World Bank | 2008 | Broadcasting has an important role to play in development, in terms of promoting information transfer, as an important economic sector in its own right, and as a potential access point to new information and communications technology. The state dominates radio broadcasting in three-quarters of the world's economies, and sectoral reform is required in order to improve governance and transparency. Issues discussed include: sector ownership reforms, convergence regulation, support for community radio stations to improve access for the poor to ICT, and pilot projects in digital television to assess the potential to widen Internet access. |

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| International | The Alternative Media Handbook | Kate Coyer, Tony Downumt and Alan Fountain (Routledge) | 2008 | A brief history of alternative media in radio, video, and film, press and activity on the Web. It includes both theoretical and practical approaches and information, including sections on fundraising, podcasting, blogging, publishing, radio production, access to broadcasting, and more. |
| International | Democratic Institute, Sustaining Media, and Civil Society | Craig L. LaMay www.aspeninstitute.org/site/apps/ka/ec/product.asp?c=huLWJeMRKpH&b=667387&en=kgJLIQOzF8IKJXOrE7ILJ2PDK7JHJZJNJIiLS11MAJiKOITNAKIKTK5NQF&ProductID=180612 | 2003 | This report of the Third International Roundtable on Journalism and Freedom of Expression examines international perspectives on civil liberties and press freedom in the aftermath of September 11, 2001. The report questions certain assumptions made regarding the inevitability of a country's march toward democracy and press freedom, including an interesting case study on "Democratization and Asian Values." The report considers a more pragmatic approach to journalism, media sustainability, and building civil society. |
| Email discussions | | | | |
| International | Community Radio for Development | The Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex www.id21.org/communityradio/finalreport/index.html | 2006 | Four-page report; summarizes an email discussion hosted by id21 in early 2006 and focused on community radio. The discussion aimed to be an opportunity for community media practitioners and activists from around the world to share their experiences and views on the role of community radio in development processes. A main focus of the discussion was sustainability, including financial, social, and institutional aspects and the relationship between sustainability and social impact. The conclusion reached was that unless social, institutional, and financial sustainability are considered equally, long-term sustainable communication processes are unlikely. Participation and ownership by communities is essential to sustainability. |
| Websites / other resources | | | | |
| Africa | AMDI | www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/trust/specials/1552_trust_amdi/page9.shtml | | Scanning media in 17 African countries. Reports on each one. Context/background. |
| Africa | Farm Radio International | www.farmradio.org | | Farm Radio International is a Canadian-based, not-for-profit organization working in direct partnership with approximately 300 radio broadcasters in 39 African countries to fight poverty and food insecurity. |
| Africa | Media Foundation for West Africa | www.mediafound.org | | The Media Foundation for West Africa is a regional independent, nonprofit, nongovernmental organization based in Accra, Ghana. It was established in 1997 to defend and promote the rights and freedoms of the media. |
| International | Audience Dialogue | www.audiencedialogue.net/pmlra.html | | List of web pages and books relating to local radio marketing. |
| International | The Communications Initiative Network | www.comminit.com | | Training guides, resources, discussion, debate, opportunities, conferences, grants, and so on. Comprehensive communications information. |
| International | Comunica | www.comunica.org | | Comprehensive resources on community media and ICTs. Also news, views, and ideas. |

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| International | BBC WST | www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/trust/archive/story/2007/08/070718_2007archive.shtml | | BBC World Service Trust Archive |
| International / E. Europe | Media Development Loan Fund | www.mdlf.org/en/mdlf/about_us/ | | Media Development Loan Fund |
| International | Institute of War and Peace Reporting | http://www.iwpr.net/?p=irr&s=p&o=-&apc_state=henparr | | General information on media in conflict/ post conflict situations. |
| Nepal | Antennae Foundation Nepal. | www.afn.org.np | | Antenna Foundation Nepal is an independent, non-governmental and non-profit organization, dedicated to the development of public service broadcasting in Nepal. |
| Southern Africa / International | Open Space Open Society Institute of Southern Africa web-site | www.osisa.org | | Variety of resources, information about funding also a journal about media in Southern Africa. |
| UK | Commedia—UK association of community media | www.commedia.org.uk | | |
| People and organizations | | | | |
| International / USA | Internews | www.internews.org | | NGO – training, development, advocacy |
| International / USA | Developing Radio Partners | www.developingradiopartners.org | | NGO / Association of consultants – training, organizational development, advocacy |
| International / UK | Panos | www.panos.org.uk | | NGO – dissemination of development news, research, training, development |
| International / US | Center for International Media Assistance / National Endowment for Democracy | www.ned.org | | Policy development / research on media, democracy and development. |
| International / UK | Media for Development | www.mediafordevelopment.org.uk | | NGO - Training, development, advocacy |
| International | AMARC | www.amarc.org | | Membership-based association; service provider – community radio stations |
| International | The Communications Initiative / Drumbeat, Soulbeat | www.comminit.com | | Online information resource |
| International | Network Media Program | www.soros.org | | Soros Foundations Network |
| International/France | Internews Europe | www.internews.fr | | NGO—training, development, advocacy |
| International/UK | International/UK Institute for War & Peace Reporting (IWPR), United Kingdom | www.iwpr.net | | NGO—training, development, network development |
| International/USA | International Center for Journalists (ICJ), United States of America | www.icjf.org | | NGO—training, development, advocacy |
| International/USA | International Research & Exchanges Board | www.irex.org | | NGO—training, development, advocacy |
| International/UK | BBC World Service Trust | www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/trust | | NGO –training, production, development |
| International/USA | Search For Common Ground | www.sfcg.org | | NGO – training, production, conflict resolution |
| International | Media Development Loan Fund (MDLF) | www.mdlf.org | | NGO – financing, capacity building |

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| International/Belgium | International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) | www.ifj.org | | NGO – advocacy, freedom of expression |
| International | Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD) | www.gfmd.info | | NGO – advocacy |
| USA | American University Center for Social Media | www.centerforsocialmedia.org | | Online information resource on social media |
| International/USA | First Voice International | www.firstvoiceint.org | | NGO – training, technical assistance, ICT solutions |
| International/USA | Equal Access | www.equalaccess.org | | NGO – training, development |
| International | International Association for Media and Communication Research | www.iamcr.org | | Promotes critical research into media |