Community Radio

Community radio involves a local station broadcasting for the local people, and involving local people. This medium can be used to initiate local awareness, discussions, and hence lead to development, particularly in developing countries, where other forms of information communication are limited.

Arguments for Radio

According to http://www.leeds.ac.uk/ics/sl-glasgow2.pdf, between 1980 and 1996:

- Radio sets per 1000 population have increased for developed countries (900 to 1100), developing countries (100 to 200) and least developed countries (10 to 100).
- TV sets per 1000 population have increased for developed countries (420 to 550) and developing countries (10 to 160), but only slightly increased in the least developed (0 to 5).

This suggests that the provision for radio is much greater than for TV, especially in the least developed countries. However, in developing countries the number of TVs is not much less than the number of radios. In many of these countries, programmes could usually still be viewed from a community television.

Conference on Communication for Development

WACC (http://www.wacconline.org.uk/404.php) is a Christian organisation that promotes and implements democratic communication, to empower the people.

Major gatherings of funding agencies, operating aid agencies, professional practitioners and business partners, during the summer of 1996, created new intersections and released a flow of information relating to the evaluation of effectiveness and the directing of funds for a next stage of initiatives in communication for development. One of them, breaking new ground, focused on Creative Radio in Emergency & Disaster (CRED) and analysed how radio succeeds as a tool for development.

The conference recognised that in the past 25 years there has been a sevenfold increase in the number of radios in the developing world. 'The figure is now estimated to be 500 million -ten times the number of television sets.' It was also pointed out that fifty percent of women in low income countries were illiterate, putting newspapers beyond their reach. 'Radio may be their only source of unbiased information.'

The aid agency is now training more than 50 local journalists and health workers in script writing, radio and video production and in audience research methodology in a training initiative that they aim to use as a model for future community radio projects in developing countries.

Training people is probably the most sustainable development activity 'because people do development, not machines'.

Outcomes of community based radio projects:

- Fertile environment for development communications
- Low operating costs
- Access to scattered people
- Promotion of traditional oral cultures
- Potential for local language programming

Authentic expression and empowerment of people at local level, which happens once a community radio station becomes established

Problems of community radio:

- Low on the list of funding priorities
- If set up by a local NGO, funding can come to an abrupt end. This mitigates against the need to build up a regular audience
- The problem of how to show value to funders, especially if a station is broadcasting in a local dialect that the funders themselves do not understand

Areas of Conflict

In an overview of communications in unstable regions of the world, Gordon Adam (BBC/ICHR Partnership) also emphasized the powerful role radio can play. Pointing out that the number of people affected by disaster had increased from 11 to 75 million in the past 30 years (Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) he said, 'Unlike much other emergency aid work, radio can avoid security constraints by transmitting educational programmes regularly from relatively secure locations.'

Deregulation

The deregulation of radio stations in Africa and Asia has contributed to the new opportunity for effective radio broadcasting for development, emphasising the need for training in the special skills needed to use radio effectively in emergency or development situations.

Community Radio using the Internet

OneWorld (http://www.oneworld.org/ips2/oct00/02_20_005.html) reports news from organisations. It claims that a radio station with tens of thousands of listeners that makes active use of the Internet can greatly multiply the impact of its Internet connection.

This will further contribute to bridging the digital divide, as more information can be accessed.

The BBC (http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/1796236.stm) reported how radio is bringing the internet to people in a mountain village in central Sri Lanka. Every

day for an hour, presenters in the studio translate and read out web pages on topics suggested by the listeners. The aim of the Kothmale Community Radio project is to provide access to the web to villagers who do not have computers and may not be able to speak English. This will reduce the Digital Divide.

The project was started almost three years ago with funding from Unesco. It has proved a big success, with no shortage of volunteers to help out.

The concept of extending the internet via radio to rural regions in developing countries was devised in 1996 during discussions between Unesco and community radio broadcasters. The idea was that the two mediums could be integrated to make the internet accessible to a wider audience.

Combining Satellite Broadcasting With The Internet For Community Radio In India

According to http://www.tenet.res.in/commsphere/s7.3.pdf, Community radio stations have been completely absent in India. The government has made several attempts at setting up local radio stations, some of which were highly successful. However, these efforts were largely top-down, lacked long-term commitment, and have languished.

Rural communities typically are not rich, and will probably not be able to afford a conventional radio station, with investment costs in the range of $ 1 million. Setting up an Internet radio station, including web space rental on a server with a high bandwidth connection to the Internet, is in the range of $ 10,000, about 2 orders of magnitude lower.

Serving Community Radio

AMARC (http://www.amarc.org/amarc/ang/) is an international non-governmental organisation serving the community radio movement, with almost 3,000 members and associates in 106 countries.

They are creating a Community Media Fund to encourage development agencies and other international actors to contribute to the creation of a community media fund. Currently, the International Board is researching an appropriate operational structure for the implementation of such a fund.

The Origin and Traditions of Community Radio

The Community Media Association (http://www.commedia.org.uk/library/training/html/rpp/Section1_1a.htm) gives information about community radio.

Community radio exists in a wide variety of forms throughout the world. The first community stations began broadcasting over fifty years ago in Latin America.

Latin America: There has been a huge variety of radio stations in Latin America since the medium first arrived on the continent. The Church, Universities, Trade Unions and Indigenous groups all run their own stations. Other groups produce programmes that are broadcast on larger, mainstream stations. Some community

radio stations literally use a loudspeaker to broadcast to the immediate neighbourhood. Latin America probably has the most dynamic radio sector in the world.

Africa and Asia: Traditionally have not had true community radio. Most radio in these regions is government controlled. But recently, there have been developments towards a community radio sector. There are some community stations opening up throughout Africa, with a very dynamic community radio network developing in South Africa. In Asia, there are some rural radio projects, and educational radio projects operating in The Philippines and a number of quite independent community stations in Vietnam.

The picture in *Eastern Europe* is different, with most new licenses going to commercial radio stations run by the west European media industry. However, there is strong interest in community-style radio and a number of stations are springing up.

Community Radio, (in contrast to mainstream) tends to:

- Encourage participation in all aspects of the station - including broadcasting and management of the station;
- Serve a local community or specific interest group;
- Encourage a wide range of people to be involved in the station, regardless of their age, race, gender etc.;
- Put the quality and diversity of information ahead of a slick programming style;
- Encourage strengthening of the local culture - music, language, literature, debate
- Get most of the programme material from local rather than national sources;
- Be governed by people with strong connections to the community and the production of radio;
- Have a number of sources of income and are not concerned with making a large profit for shareholders;
- Encourage paid and voluntary staff to work alongside each other on equal terms.

Community Radio in Africa and Latin America

The Rockefeller Foundation (http://www.devmedia.org/documents/Position%20paper.htm) highlights that the community radio movements that stand out are in Africa and Latin America. By definition, community radio stations cannot succeed without local control, citizen participation, local issues-based programming and open access. Yet radio remains essentially a top-down methodology; that is, someone decides what will be broadcast, it airs, and is received passively by listeners.

The better community radio stations, such as Cape Flats' (South Africa) Bush Radio, Radio Zibonele in the Khayelitsha community of Cape Town, South Africa,

and Alexandra Township's community station focus on audience participation. New programming stems from the suggestions listeners make when phoning into the stations, or when they are working there as volunteer staff. Critical issues facing the communities are discussed – and problem solving happens in real time – on the air.

Community Radio station in New Mexico

Kaleidoscope Radio (http://www.angelfire.com/poetry/gallup/) has been created to give the people of Gallup, New Mexico, a forum for freedom of speech on the radio dial, limited only by the boundaries of nonviolence and love. Kaleidoscope Radio will not tolerate hatred and violence in our programming, because the point of community radio is to hold each other in high esteem and to share our resources.

The East African Pilot Project – community radio and resource centres.

The Communication Initiative (http://www.comminit.com/streview/sld-5237.html) lists community media projects. One of these is an east African pilot project to establish three community resource centres and radio stations in Kibwezi, Kenya, Terrat, Tanzania and Kagadi, Uganda. The pilot project was initiated in 1993 at the request of three community-based organisations: the Mang'elete Women's Group through the African Medical and Research Foundation (AMREF) in Mang'elete; the Orkonerei Integrated Pastoralists' Survival Programme (OIPSP) in Terrat; and the Uganda Rural Development Training (URDT) in Kagadi.

Community Radio in India

http://www.comminit.com/news/mediabeat/mb_a0276.html describes how for decades, India's radio stations have been centralised, government-controlled, over-dependent on relays and lacking in editorial independence. In recent years, a small number of citizens' groups across India have been pushing for something very different, through the community radio model.

Privatisation and total deregulation will not mean much to the average citizen if radio fails to get a chance to play a vital role in their lives. India has so far clearly given step-motherly treatment to public service, community, educational and development broadcast networks.

Over five years back, the Indian Supreme Court gave an interesting ruling. This judgment strongly critiqued the long-held government monopoly over broadcasting in this country. In early 1995, the court declared the airwaves as public property, to be utilised for promoting public good and ventilating plurality of views, opinions and ideas. (AIR 1995 Supreme Court 1236).

This judgment held that the 'freedom of speech and expression' guaranteed by Article 19(1)(a) of the Indian Constitution includes the right to acquire and disseminate information. And, in turn, the right to disseminate includes the right to communicate through any media -- print, electronic or audio-visual.

Recently, a group meeting in Hyderabad issued the Pastapur Initiative on Community Radio, released at the end of a four-day UNESCO-sponsored workshop. It pointed out that "a truly people's radio should perceive listeners not only as receivers and consumers, but also as active citizens and creative producers of media content."

If the government is really serious about freeing broadcasting from state monopoly, then it needs to proceed to its logical conclusion by expanding the available media space and permitting communities and organisations representing them to run their own radio stations.

It was also pointed out that community radio should have three key aspects: non-profit making, community ownership and management, and community participation. Community radio is distinguished by its limited local reach, low-power transmission, and programming content that reflects the educational, developmental and cultural needs of the specific community it serves.

India could well benefit from the creation of a three-tier system of broadcasting in the country: a state-owned public service network (existing framework); commercial private broadcasting; and non-profit, people-owned and managed community radio stations.

Non-profit and development organisations have been lobbying for more than five years to get permission to broadcast information that could help the "information poor" to get an understanding of issues critical to their lives. Recently, neighbouring countries like Nepal and Sri Lanka edged past India by allowing non-profit community radios to be set up. Asian countries like the Philippines have already shown the beneficial impact of such locally-managed, non-profit initiatives taken up by citizens themselves.

"In Sri Lanka, we are using a community radio station in Kotmale to find information on the Internet, which readers ask for via phone or post. This helps simple villagers to get access to the information superhighway too," University of Colombo journalism lecturer Michael J.R. David said during a recent visit to India. He is the project leader of the Kotmale community radio station, which took off in May 1999 but is already being studied worldwide as an innovative experiment in development communication.

India's state-owned All India Radio (AIR) had set up a string of local radio stations some years ago. But without carrying these plans through effectively, the stations were not locally relevant and community-run. By contrast, community stations can play an important role. Repeated changes in governments and bureaucratic red tape has meant that community radio is still to become a reality in India.

Today, it is technically and economically feasible to set up hundreds, if not thousands, of low-powered FM radio stations across the country. These would not interfere with one another. What is lacking are the government laws to permit this, and the political will to allow radio to play its role in a country like India.

Some suggestions that have recently been considered in this country include: small transmitters with a reach of ten kilometers, one studio with recording and

broadcasting facilities, and broadcast hours flexible to fit into local demand -- for example, before and after field work in early morning and late evening in rural India.

India's middle classes seem to have re-discovered radio - with the FM boom -- in the 'nineties. But for the bulk of the citizens of this country, radio is virtually the only electronic gadget they can afford. There's no medium other than radio that can offer relevant, local information too, provided it is aptly utilised.

Radio has already proven its relevance to Indians. Recent studies suggest that radio in India has a potential listener-ship of 98.5% of the population of this vast country. There are some 104 million radio homes, double the number of TV homes. Radio has a far broader reach than television.

Over the last decade, All India Radio has focused more on the rural population and the urban lower middle classes, unlike TV's preoccupation with the relatively smaller number of urban upper middle classes. It has also been argued that considering the low levels of literacy in India and the low purchasing power of the large majority, radio will inevitably retain its edge over the print media and television in terms of outreach.

Setting up Community Radio Stations

Community Radio Satellite (ComRadSat) (http://www.cbaa.org.au/content.php/207.html) is a service for community radio stations - allowing you to access a wide range of national programming to complement your own local programs.

To receive this service the equipment needed is:
1. A solid dish (costs between $400-$800 depending on size and quality).
2. An LNB (a down converter at the focal point of the dish, costing between $100-$400)
3. A digital receiver (around $1,000).
4. Smart card ($100)
5. Balancing equipment (around $300)
6. Installation (between nothing and $500)
7. A device for recording your program onto - many use a VHS recorder, but you could use a computer, mini-disc or another system.

Some stations have lost money trying to use other cheaper satellite reception equipment which does not work satisfactorily.

Weaver Street Market

PTFP (Public Telecommunications Facilities Program) provides matching grants for equipment purchases for public radio and TV stations. Weaver Street Market community radio (http://www.google.co.uk/search?hl=en&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8&q=TV+Broadcasting+equipment+costs&spell=1) requested a grant for 75% of the cost of the needed equipment, or about $33,000. The PTFP will provide 75

percent of the roughly $44,000 in equipment costs to build a low-power radio station in Carrboro, said Ruffin Slater, the group's president and general manager of Weaver Street Market.
Chapel Hill Herald April 10, 2003

KFOK 95.1 FM - Community Radio, GEORGETOWN

According to http://www.google.co.uk/search?hl=en&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8&q=TV+Broadcasting+equipment+costs&spell=1 , the capital cost for putting together the equipment for the station was estimated to be between $18,000 and $20,000, however, thanks to the efforts of everyone involved we have managed to get on air by acquiring used and donated equipment on a budget of only $7,000. There are many needed equipment upgrades and the yearly cost to run the station is estimated at $8,000 which includes rent, utilities, insurance, office supplies and BMI and ASCAP licenses.

The micro-power radio movement

According to http://www.angelfire.com/poetry/gallup/, since 1978 the FCC (Federal Communications Commission) no longer offers licences for stations under 100 watts ("micro-power" or "low-power" fm) so that all such licensed stations disappeared by the mid-1980s. This left the regulation of unlicensed low-power stations up to the decentralised responsibility of the local stations themselves.

Micro-power Broadcasting

The Micro-power Broadcasting, Free Radio Movement (http://www.radio4all.org/how-to.html) has shown that an FM broadcast station does not have to consist of rooms full of equipment costing tens of thousands of dollars.

Micro-power broadcasting uses FM transmitters whose power output is in the range of 1/2 to 40 watts. These transmitters combined with other equipment including inexpensive audio mixers, consumer audio gear, a power supply, filter and antenna enable any community to put its own voice on the air at an average cost of $1000-$1500. This is far more affordable than the tens or hundreds of thousands required by the current FCC regulatory structure.

The main argument the FCC uses against micro-power broadcasting is the issue of interference with other broadcast services. Interference is a valid concern. By using equipment that is frequency stable and properly fitted with harmonic suppression filters along with good operating procedures and standards, the FCC's argument can be effectively neutralised.

The technical aspects of micro-power broadcasting require some basic knowledge in the areas of electronics and broadcast practices. It is hoped that as this movement grows a network of people with the required technical skills will be formed to assist in the process of empowering every community with its own voice.

This website also gives information on setting up a community radio station.

Setting up Community Radio in the UK

A document (How To Set Up A Community WLAN) has been prepared to provide a guide to setting up a community based not-for-profit Broadband Wireless Local Area Network in the U.K.

The community self-help co-operative alternative as a new concept originated in the U.K. and has been promoted since 1998 via the World Wide amateur radio community and the original website: - www.wlan.org.uk.

In its simplest manifestation a Community WLAN starts with a “HUB” - a single strategically placed, shared wireless “Access Point” (AP) connected to an omni-directional community antenna located at some common vantage point. This allows at any one time up to 128 computer users with “wireless LAN transceivers” at any ”line-of-sight” visible distance of over 10 miles, to interconnect free of charge to an 11Mb/sec local area network “hub”.

All facilities normally available to users of a “wired” network and especially broadband internet gateways to the outside world; neighbouring community networks, multiple video conferencing nodes, independent community TV & Radio webcasting and file servers may be added in due course on an ad hoc and possibly commercial sponsored or subscription paying basis from ANY point on a newly created alternative network.

A Community Wireless Local Area Network differs from commercial alternatives, in its primacy of core consumer values. Traditional Co-operative structures preserve a neighbourly community sharing ethos, fair disposal of collective profits and long-term strategic benefits.

Adaption to Digital Radio Transmitters

NTIA (National Telecommunications and Information Administration) (http://www.ntia.doc.gov/otiahome/ptfp/Application/equipcost_Radio.html) anticipates funding digital-compatible transmitters to replace analog transmitters, if requested by applicants and justified as urgent replacement. Recipients may add HD Radio (IBOC) exciters to PTFP-funded digital-compatible transmitters or use grant funds awarded for an analog or digital-compatible radio transmitter towards the purchase of a transmitter with an IBOC exciter.

This website includes a list of pricings, according to different power levels of transmission.

International Amateur Radio Union

The International Amateur Radio Union (http://www.iaru.org/iaru-soc.html) puts forward the view that Amateur Radio must organise nationally and internationally. This is to achieve better mutual use of the radio spectrum among radio amateurs throughout the world, to develop Amateur Radio worldwide, and to successfully interact with the agencies responsible for regulating and allocating radio frequencies.

The website also includes addresses for unions worldwide.

Summary: Community Radio

Community Radio provides unbiased information, which is particularly important in areas where literacy rates are low, or women are under-represented in media. Community participation is encouraged, bringing empowerment to the local people. Radio is also a safe way of providing information to areas of conflict, or during an emergency. When radio is combined with the internet, the audience increases, and the source of information available to people dramatically widens, bridging the digital divide. Many examples show the positive management and effects of community radio stations.

Radio stations are often affected by licence fees and legislation. Payments can be funded by donors, such as UNESCO, or advertisements. But many micro-power stations are released from centralised regulation.

There are organisations that provide equipment to developing countries, appropriate to the local environment, such as fuel availability or population density. These prices can start at $1000, in contrast to $16,750 to set up a local American mall radio station. Therefore, by using suitable equipment, micro-broadcasting can be achieved with no interference and little cost. However, technical skills are needed to set up a station. It is also anticipated that digital transmitters will soon be widely used.