

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Societies anywhere in the world thrive to maintain a specific trend in life as dictated to and demanded by the ever-changing socio-economic conditions that we find ourselves in.

In our quest and desire to meet these demands, the little efforts we exert are thwarted by inequalities, social inferiorities and underdevelopment such that we (Human beings) then accept the situation as a God-given one.

Community involvement in the development process, for an instance, creates a sense of ownership of the particular initiative thereby increasing the desire from the community to further protect what they feel is theirs. It also helps the community by giving them tools that they can use to advance them, and in the process limit their dependency on others for survival. Knowledge and information is the only thing they need.

Community Medias are based on these very same principles and encourage community development at all costs by feeding the community with information designed to take them out of all the social ills. This is done on target groups such as the learned youth whose information can be obtained from community newspapers and also through the use of ICTs. Resource centers also provide valuable information for the people with the different illnesses while community radios remain the only media with a larger audience because of its flexibility. It is for this reason that this document contains material that only talks about radio initiatives.

This paper therefore seeks to present the need for the availability of community multimedia with special emphasis on radios in the development perspective of communities. It further states how they are monitored and the role of government in their developments.

What Is A Community Radio?

In relation to community radio, the term “community” refers to a collective or a group of people sharing common characters of interests. It can either be defined as a geographically based group of persons of a social group or sector of the public who have common or specific interests. Therefore community radios can either be:

Geographically founded; this means that it serves a particular geographical community.

Community of interests; These are stations that serve a particular group within the community, such as religious communities etc. E.g. in Swaziland we have the Voice of The Church (VOC), which broadcasts Christian programs.

Coverage area for community radio; It usually differ from county to country, either from thirty kilometers to about a hundred kilometers radius.

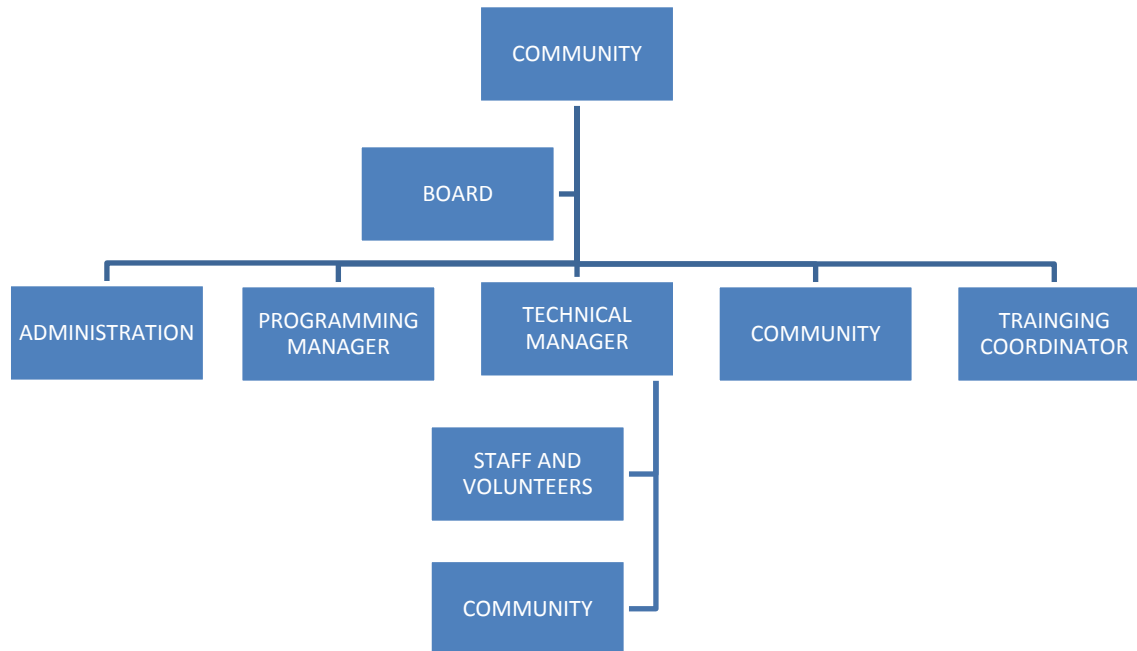
However, common interests in a particular community is quite flexible and can be social, sectional, economical, cultural etc, the most common case of exclusion being that of political parties.

So a community radio is a radio station broadcasting for the community and by the community. It is described clearly under the following aspects: Ownership and control, nonprofit aspect and community participation.

Ownership and Control

Ownership and control of a community radio is usually the most crucial and contentious aspects in defining such a station. This can be effected through communities holding public meetings where leadership of the station is elected into the board of trustees/directors. The leadership takes decisions in between the AGMs, which are the supreme decision-making forum. Such leadership is meant to represent the community’s interests in the day to day running of the station’s activities and ensure that policies guiding the daily management are developed and reflect the interest of the community that station serves.

Management Structure of Community Radios: Organogram



NON-PROFIT ASPECT

Central to the definition of a community radio is that it should either be registered as a nonprofit making organization or owned by an organization that is registered as a nonprofit entity.

This simple means the station is not run as an instrument/project for profit making purposes, rather as a means of communication for the community. However, the non-profit making concept does not mean the radio initiative cannot operate along business lines or best still, generate commercial revenues (for instance, from advertising).

Furthermore, it does not mean that the radio cannot generate income in excess of its basic expenditure (i.e a surplus; excess income in nonprofit making organization can't be called profit rather a surplus). Any surplus generated has to be ploughed back in to the project, be spent or invested in any development of a community project in the area of coverage.

PARTICIPATION

Another very important aspect in community radios is community participation. Participation is encouraged from the early stages of setting up such a station. This ensures that the community is involved in the running of the station in the following activities:

Election of Leadership

Policy Making

Station Management

Programs selections

Production of programs

Official external representation

Membership

Participation in listeners club

WHAT COMMUNITY RADIO IS NOT?

- Community Radio is many things but the following factors are not part of community radio.
- A mouth-piece for the government
- Platform to promote individual interest or political agenda
- A business that is interested in making profits
- A commercial operation that limits community participation in its programming

THE THREE TYPES OF RADIOS

The ideal mode/type of radios is one that makes a clear distinction between; commercial/private, public radio and community radio

Commercial/Private Radio	Public Radio/Broadcaster	Community Radio
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Owned and controlled by private business people• Profit driven• Financed mainly through advertising• Controlled by its shareholders• Programming determined by the station, commercial factors without community involvement• Programming is market driven	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Has a public mandate• Financed through advertising and by the state• Makes profits to a certain extent• Does not have shareholders• Allows a certain level of input into programming from the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Owned and controlled by the community• Non-profit making organization• Donor funded• Does not have shareholders for dividends• Programming has community input• Content is local and development driven• Financed through advertising, membership, announcement, road shows and programme sponsorship

ROLE OF COMMUNITY RADIO IN THE SOCIETY

Community radio is cost effective, easy to operate, reaches all members of that community in their own language. As a local, grassroots media, it increases the development potential cultivated from sharing local information, knowledge and skills within the specific community. Community radios inform, educate, and entertain and most importantly empower the community by giving a strong public voice to the voiceless, which encourages greater accountability in public affairs.

HOW ARE THEY REGULATED?

Ideally an Independent Broadcasting Regulator/Authority (IBR/A) regulates community radios (CR). This is usually a statutory body that is autonomous from government and political interference. In countries where the IBR/A does not exist government controls and monitors the operations of community radios (CR). Whereas in countries where the IBR/A is in place, the licensing department has a monitoring mechanism which is responsible for the supervising CR in adhering to the licensing conditions as stipulated by the local law.

The most preferred means for regulating CR is the IBR/A so that the issuance of licenses could be free from economic and political interference.

THE ROLE OF THE BOARD MEMBERS

As highlighted earlier on, the board of trustees/directors is elected on an AGM by fully paid-up members of the community present. Each constituency must have a representative on the board whose role is to ensure that the station serves the interests of the community. The board must further assess the day to day running of the station and maintain a strict adherence to policies.

BENEFITS OF THE BOARD

The board of trustees/directors must be “community development” conscious persons hence board members are not employed but are subject to sitting allowances for meetings convened. There is also training for the board which automatically maximizes their chances for first preferences on any available posts

The close working relationship with donors creates an opportunity for the respective board members to acquire resources that may help facilitate development in their respective constituencies. In few words than many, board serving remains a call for people who want to be part of history and contribute to an internationally recognized development initiative.

COMMUNITY RADIO PROGRAMMING

One of the responsibilities of CR is to produce good quality and locally relevant programmes. These are usually programmes based on participatory methods and sustainable development content that is aimed at developing the community.

RECIPE FOR GOOD PROGRAMMING

- Programmes are well researched, accurate and unbiased towards government or political groupings and individuals.
- Community relevance
- Support for cultural and moral values
- Programs that have community input and expertise
- Development based programs that promote the lives of the local population.

MONITORING OF COMMUNITY RADIO PROGRAMMES

- Monitoring of CR programmes remains one of the many important factors in ensuring that a station conforms to the license conditions.
 - It is IBR/A or government's responsibility to set up a monitoring mechanism to oversee the operations of CRs.
 - Regulating officers can either be assigned to a particular station that they will regularly visit to listen to broadcasting content or request the tapes to take them for private listening.
 - During election periods, regulating officers go on fields and conduct content monitoring.
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COMMUNITY RADIO STATION POLICY

A community radio station and its employees are governed by a community radio station policy which describes in details the rules, codes of conduct and ethical standards that must be followed at all times. All staff, volunteers and visitors are privileged to uphold the reputation of the radio station and the community it exists to represent, and are guided in doing so by the following policy.

CODE OF ETHICS

A community radio should be one that is operated in the community, for the community, about the community. Community radio means that content is NOT controlled by the government, the owner, or the funder, but by professional journalists and the community members themselves. This means the station has an obligation to be fair, balanced, accurate, professional and above all, committed to diversity in its programming and its staff. As such, the station adheres to the following ethical standards.

- **No Preferential Treatment:** A community radio should be established with the understanding that it shall in no way give advantage or disadvantaged to a political party or candidate, political

platform or other political interest or group. Staff must ensure full respect for basic democratic processes and journalistic ethics.

- **Fair and Equal Time:** All reporters shall maintain balance and impartiality in news and current affairs and have the duty to strive for accuracy. In the covering of any controversial or contested event, such as elections, political debates, government decisions or community controversies, reporters shall, to the best of their ability, strive to provide equal air time for each side of the story. For example, if a political person from one side is given half an hour on air, then half an hour must be given to the other side.
- **Diversity:** The station will strive to maintain a wide diversity of programming and staff. Treatment of ethnic, tribal, religious and cultural communities and relations, gender issues, children and disadvantaged groups shall be handled with the utmost professionalism and regard for others. While respecting the dignity and worth of every individual, the station shall strive to provide diversity in its coverage and its staff. The station shall treat all stories equally without distinction whatsoever of race, gender, religion, color, national or ethnic origin, language, marital status, age, socio-economic status, disability, political conviction or any other distinguishing feature. The station shall strive to achieve proper balance over a series of programmes, or over time, rather than in every individual programme.
- **No Tolerance for Hatred:** Community radio usually plays a positive and informative role in society. However, there are many documented cases of media being manipulated by actors intent on instigating violent conflict. Radio stations will never broadcast material that aims, intentionally or unintentionally, to incite conflict, spread hatred, promote one ideological view over another or one group of people over another, or malign any person or groups of people.
- **Keep Good Taste:** The staff should always choose decent topics, language, jokes and presentation. Obscenity, blasphemy, profanity and vulgarity have no place on air. Curse words are forbidden.
- **Be a Watchdog:** All reporters should strive to inform about what people in power are doing, and how their actions are affecting citizens.
- **Tell The Truth:** The announcer/reporter must report only facts gathered from reliable sources. If information has not been adequately researched and verified, the broadcasters should avoid using it on the air. If unverified information needs to be aired for the sake of forewarning the people, the announcer should clearly identify those pieces of information that have not been checked.
- **Keep Your Opinions to Yourself:** a reporter shall avoid introducing his/her own opinion, prejudice, partiality, inclination or personal belief when reporting an event or describing a situation.
- **Respect Privacy:** The urge, and even the right of the community to know, is not a license for staff to breach a person's privacy. Information withheld by a person for personal or family reasons should not be used in the name of public information. A reporter should respect off-the record information told to him/her by an interviewee.
- **Don't Spread Rumors:** There is a lot of wrong information, rumor and gossip delivered to radio station staff. It is always tempting to repeat them on the air. However, all information should be

validated before it is aired. It is better to take time and validate information than be the one to get it wrong.

- **Don't Accept Gifts:** No funds or gifts shall be accepted from political parties and from other vested interests that may make the station beholden to them. Should the question arise, a contribution may be accepted only if the community radio station management decides that the gift is not extravagant or is meant in any way to influence station policy. It is a violation of this policy for an unauthorized member of the station to give or receive funds, favors, or gifts in the name of the station, or programme or for personal benefit.

CODE OF CONDUCT

All staff and volunteers are responsible for promoting respect for fundamental human rights, social justice and human dignity. While respecting the worth of every individual, staff and volunteers will treat all persons equally without distinction whatsoever of race, gender, religion, color, national or ethnic origin, language, marital status, age, socio-economic status, disability, political conviction or any other distinguishing feature. All staff, volunteers and visitors shall adhere to the following rules.

- Treat fellow workers, guests, visitors and others you meet in the course of your work, with the respect you would wish others to give you. This should be a safe environment for all staff and visitors, including yourself.
- If you have a problem with another member of staff which cannot be solved between you, please refer to a senior member of staff who will deal with the matter. If your problem is with a senior member of station staff, please refer the problem to a senior member of the community radio station or Mercy Corps.
- Verbal, physical or sexual violence, harassment or bullying are totally unacceptable and may lead to instant dismissal.
- Every reporter shall help a member of staff who is placed in a difficult situation. He/She should offer support, additional information, contacts, and materials to a fellow broadcaster in need.
- It is a violation of the integrity of the community radio to appear at the station under influence of alcohol or drugs, or to drink or use drugs at the station (this applies to management, staff, volunteers and guests).
- No staff will condone or participate in corrupt or illegal activities.
- No staff will take advantage of their position to exploit victims, their families or communities. No member of the station shall give or receive funds, favors, or gifts in the name of the station, with the aim of receiving personal benefit.
- No person shall be allowed to carry firearms inside the studio, irrespective of whether the person is a member of the police or military.
- Radio staff shall not bring personal guests or relatives to the station who have not been advised of all these regulations.

EQUIPMENT POLICY

- Only staff and approved volunteers may use and operate station equipment, including laptops, recording devices, playback devices, and all broadcasting equipment.
- Station equipment is not for personal or recreational use and may never be taken home or out of the station without written permission from the community radio station.
- Equipment may never be lent to other persons or organizations.
- Broken equipment should be reported to and repaired by the community radio station staff only.