

## LUBOMBO COMMUNITY RADIO COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING AND TRAINING

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Lubombo Community Radio (LCR) is based in the Lubombo region and there are eleven constituencies in the region, mainly Tikhuba, Lugongolweni, Mpolonjeni, Nkilongo, Lubulini, Sitfobelweni, Siphofaneni, Dvokodvweni, Hlane, Mhlume and Lomahasha. LCR intended to cover the entire region but the regulator wants to pilot by granting 20w transmitters to upcoming community radios in the country. Findings of a previous technical Feasibility study implies that the radio station will fully cover four constituencies, Tikhuba, Lugongolweni, Mpolonjeni and Dvokodvweni. Spill over to the other constituencies will be the order of the day, but LCR programming shall strictly focus mostly on issues of the four identified constituencies.

**Following LCR discussions with relevant authorities it transpired that next year i.e. 2011, the regulator will finalize the licensing process. As a result it was critical for LCR to capacitate the community on how to utilize the facility and how to manage it to be sustainable to lay a concrete foundation for a smooth transition. LCR want to ensure all partners that invested their resources to make the training program a great success that it will go a long way indeed.**

### 2.0 LUBOMBO COMMUNITY MULTIMEDIA PARTNERS

Lubombo Community Multimedia Centre enjoys a healthy working relationship with a number of both Non-governmental Organizations in the field of community development. Of note is the fact that all these organizations including LCMC seeks to address social ills using community responsive measures to ensure community participation. As expected, this reduces the risks of having a community kept in the sidelines rather than being active participants in the development processes. Depending on the field of operation for the partner LCMC invited specifically organizations that were in community communication and development in the Lubombo region. One of this uses edutainment in response to HIV/AIDS related matters while the other organizes the community around agric related issues, a critical component that remains the only means of survival for the Lubombo folks. Siteki Red Cross Society is one NGO that was invited to the road shows to educate fellow community members on the importance of community participation on social issues with special emphasis on HIV. The group does drama with a theme developed conforming to that of the event. The other partner that was active in the capacity building project was COSPE, an Italian NGO based in Siteki that promotes Sustainable and conservation agriculture as important means for HIV/AIDS impact mitigation because agriculture remains the source of livelihood in the region. COSPE continues to pledge her support to community based responses in her framework of operation and is more than ready to utilize opportunities of communication provided by organizations like LCMC in order to reach touch the hearts of the population to enhance its capacity on social issues. Homeboys Music Production Company a company that rent out PA systems and entertainment.

### 3.0 COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTEERS RECRUITING TRAINING

For the past Ten years, LCMC has been recruiting and training volunteers to work in the various constituencies of coverage but due to the delay in the licensing process, the organization has

experienced massive staff turnovers because of the underlying fact that they lay idle while economic opportunities opens up for them. It was for this reason that LCMC had to recruit and train new volunteers in that will market the radio station in the rural communities and also teach and mobilize the community for all activities initiated by the station. **Our area of focus has four constituencies as listed in the introduction being Tkhuba, Siteki, Mpolonjeni and Dvokodwveni. The recruitment was based on the number of chiefdoms a constituency has and only one active youth per chiefdom would represent the community as a volunteer. Tikhuba has four chiefdoms therefore four volunteers, Siteki four, Mpolonjeni and Dvokodwveni both five bringing the number to eighteen.**

**As gender sensitive as ever, the station would recruit to balance gender meaning where there are five people three must be females thus we ended up having nine females for training.**

**The course content was developed by LCMC with special attention to community radio and the topics included the following areas:**

- **What is community radio**
- **Ownership and control of community radios**
- **Community radio sector in Swaziland**
- **The role of the board, community and volunteers**
- **Membership drive**
- **Feedback on the licensing process**
- **Community mobilization**
- **Community radio sustainability**

The rural folks had to know the importance of radio in society and also how best they can use it to their own advantage pursuant of the fact that they own and control it. In doing this, LCMC needed foot soldiers that would be readily available for community meetings where issues of that magnitude are always raised to assist community members to have a grasp in the operations of community media and further be updated on developments on the licensing process.

#### 4.0 LUBOMBO COMMUNITY RADIO ROADSHOWS

The road shows started in August 2009 until November the same year in the four areas of operation for the station, which covers the distribution of frequency to be granted by the regulator per a station. Local entertainment groups participated by giving performances aimed at sensitizing the community about the relevance of community media especially radio. Also present during the road shows were community leaders who pledged their support for such an initiative, some went to an extent of providing meals for the guests and participants during the road shows.

The Honorable members of parliament for the four constituencies also participated by clarifying to the eager members of the community the steps involved in securing a broadcasting license and also called for submissions for the media bill still to be tabled in parliament that will regulate community radios. It was agreed in principle that individual efforts will render the struggle for broadcasting not only ineffective but also tiresome and demanding to those waging it. It was this very same understanding that the MPs vowed to work together with community radio practitioners in order to see their dream come true while at the same time the development state of the region is uplifted.

Minority groups like the Deaf community saw an opportunity not to be missed with LCMC road shows rather decided to educate the various sectors of society on what it means to be deaf and also the role the general members of society can play to support deaf people.

## 5.0 CAPACITY BUILDING AND TRAINING OUTCOME

We have a strong reason to thank WACC for contributing in the previous program, we have just finished the program but there are few things we can point as outcomes. All the volunteers displayed talent and commitment in their area coverage. After receiving training they managed to mobilize resources from their communities to cover food provided to the big crowd that participated in the road shows. Some community leaders contributed best to feed the people, that is sign that the community is well informed, they are aware that for the station mission to be accomplished they should play a leading role. Some members of the community are now advocating for the speedy of the licensing process, and now that the people are making noise government is moving faster than before. Lubombo community radio has established broad networking with a number of institutions. This is as a result that in all the road shows media coverage was positive.

## 6.0 FINANCIAL REPORT

Lubombo Community radio managed to utilize her limited resource to cover all the budgeted activities. A sum of E4755.00/US\$594.00 was not used because one of our partners (COSPE) covered meals during the preparations of the road shows and one of the banners.

## 7.0 COMMUNITY REACTION ON ROAD SHOWS AND EXPECTATIONS

Having successfully conducted the four road shows in our area of coverage (though we acknowledge shortfalls in the part of information dissemination by our volunteers) we are confident of the response we managed to cultivate from the target audience. We put it on record that community members are now aware that LCR is not yet on air and the reasons behind that, that there is a need to have a community media that will address relevant issues and LCMC is the best for that, that the long and tiresome wait might come to fruition this year because the media bill is set to be tabled in Parliament.

### **Community Recommendations and Comments**

Pursuant of the fact that all stake holders understand their role to play in the sustainability of the station and its operations once it takes off, our office received voluntary recommendations from members of the community during and after the road shows. These are from all angles of society, from business to traditional healers, from local NGOs to community support schemes. Captured below are some of the few recommendations:

1. "LCR must use alternative ways to lobby government to consider issuing out broadcasting licenses. One of those ways would be the community newspaper to prove her ability to disseminate news".(MISA SD)
2. "Information dissemination remains a critical area for people seeking to address community development and ways should be made to make that information available to the people. The

community newspaper might close the gap before LCR is granted the license but people will be still informed” COSPE Swaziland.

3. “As we all gear ourselves for this long and enduring wait, it is very much encouraging to note that LCMC has not only focused on the radio but also spread her wings to print, how I wish that it can be kept going just to give our youth something to do. They should be considered first when this license is granted.” Tikhuba Constituency Headman.
4. “You should make community adverts much cheaper because you know we are not working but we do want to notify our relatives when death or strikes” spectator.
5. “We will be more than happy to work with LCR to quell the myth about traditional medicine and we wish they are granted licenses very soon because people are dying out there and we want to reach out using a most convenient way, community radio. What happened to the newspaper that once circulated around?” President of Traditional Healers Association

#### 8.0 LUBOMBO COMMUNITY RADIO WAYFORWARD

Judging from the above presented information, the organization proposes the following as a way forward to further consolidate the efforts done to this end in cognizance of the fact that the license is on the pipeline.

We believe that capacitating of volunteers remains a critical component to drive the process forward so that they come handy when communities raises concerns with regards to the radio station and its activities. Further than that, since the station has new board members, it is also equally important that they understand their duties and the processes they are to follow in ensuring that the station is well sustained and has the relevant type of resources to see it through. Therefore this means that there should be a well coordinated and consistent capacity framework to upgrade their understanding of community radios and their sustainability visa versa community involvement and decision making to avoid the overlapping of duties for program officers thus the need to continuously train them. As much as it is understood the station is not yet on air, there is a growing need that it can conduct a visibility study to assess and understand its expectations from the community and also get a feel of the situation at grass root communities. This will go a long and rewarding way where LCR can easily be identified through a rigorous marketing strategy for visibility purposes.

LCMC membership request WACC permission to utilize the unspent money (as per the expenditure statement) to develop billboards, paint and print the name of the organization in here new building so that the community can easily allocate the station offices. Currently there are no signs that lead stakeholders to our new site and the name of the organization is not printed in the new building for the community to find the place.

#### 9.0 CONCLUSION

Community involvement and participation is critical for a community radio to be self sustainable. The community capacity building and training program was worth it because as an organization we know all the needs and expectations of the community. May I now take this opportunity on behalf the entire

community of the Lubombo Region, board, management and volunteers of the Lubombo community multimedia centre to thank WACC for funding our organization.