

**Training of Vernacular Broadcasters on
Gathering, production and Dissemination of
Pro-poor Information and News**

End of Project Report

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1 Introduction

The project sought to train and empower vernacular broadcasters as agents of poverty alleviation by enabling them to identify, package and deliver pro-poor programmes in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon. These un-trained but highly motivated “media men and women” who bridge the gap in rural and community broadcasting were taught elements like news gathering, news writing, techniques in broadcasting, production of community programmes, how to market their programmes to fend income, equipment handling etc.

At the end, the project we assisted them to form 2 regional networks of vernacular (National Language) broadcasters to enhance their skills through experience-sharing and working in synergy with each other for their respective audiences and promote what has become a vital component of the media in Cameroon.

Specifically the project planned to train at least 100 vernacular broadcasters within project period to properly identify and professionally deliver pro-poor messages that will assist the local people combat poverty and earn a better living.

The activities intended to be carried out were,

- To identify and create a data base of Rural and Local Radio stations in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon particularly those that emphasise the use of local languages in their programming.
- Organise two regional workshops with all vernacular broadcasters (one in the South West and another in the North West)
- Training on rural communication and conception
- Production of pro-poor micro-programmes.
- Provide basic technical assistance to the vernacular broadcasters in the forms of Tape recorders, headphones etc
- Forming 2 regional networks of Vernacular broadcasters.

**2) South West Workshop- March 25 and 26 2010, CERUT Conference Hall,
Mile 2 Limbe**

The first workshop was organised in Limbe for the South West Region on 25 and 26 March 2010 at the CERUT Conference hall, Limbe, and brought together 35 National Language Broadcasters from all the six Divisions of the South West Region.

Participants arrived Limbe on the Thursday morning and registration began as early as 8 am, and then the opening ceremony which was presided over at by the Divisional Delegate of Communication for the host Division, Fako, and Madam Jacky Balon.

While welcoming the participants, the Chief Executive officer of Eden Radio, Zachee NzohNgandembou, called on them to take advantage of the training and improve on their communication skills.

He explained that, increasingly rural and community radio stations disseminate news in the vernacular to better inform their local population, adding that this has given rise to many National Languages broadcasters, largely untrained.

The CEO of Eden Radio noted that, while broadcasting in the National language (Vernacular) is good in itself, there is absolute need to update, improve and sustain their skills.

Some of these broadcasters, he noted have been to school while others are retired persons with hidden talents that should be enhanced and strengthened.

He said it is against this backdrop that Eden saw the urgent need to provide these broadcasters with some elementary professional training.

In her opening address, Jacky Balon, representing the Minister of Communication, hoped the workshop would be professionally enriching.

She told the participants that poverty is still a major pre-occupation in the rural communities and added that we cannot over emphasize the Importance of National Languages Broadcasters in the current fight to alleviate poverty.

While lauding the efforts of Eden Radio and its partner, the World Association of Christian Communicators, WACC, she noted that the role of National Languages Broadcasters in these changing times is very vital for holistic community survival.

According to the Delegate the workshop to improve the skills and knowledge of National Languages Broadcasters is a major step in the right direction.

Speaking on the expertise of Eden Radio, the Minister's representative, said drawing from Eden Radio's rich background in the field of training, especially from RFI and the British High Commission, just to name a few, she was convinced that Eden Radio was the best choice for WACC to partner with.

She concluded by saying that she hopes the Marriage between Eden Radio and WACC would grow from strength to strength for the betterment of all Cameroonians.

After the Divisional Delegate's official opening message, the participants joined in for group photographs and later on had a coffee break

When the coffee break was over, the hall was rearranged for the workshop proper.

2.1) Presentation 1- Basic Information Gathering Skills

- What is news

- Types of news

- News gathering

- News writing

Presentation 1 was facilitated by Paul Kode, a veteran Journalist and Media Consultant.

For 90 Minutes, Paul Kode refreshed the participants on "Basic information gathering skills". Explaining the origin, types, sources of information etc

The participatory lectures was followed by a series of questions and answers

The participants were treated to a short break to make way for the second presentation of the Day.

2.2) Presentation 2- Production and Dissemination of Pro poor Programmes

Rural communication and conception

Broadcast techniques

Studio techniques

Voice control

Basic techniques in editing

How to use an audio recorder

Paul Kode used practical examples of problems facing the rural communities amongst which, the majority is poverty and how to put an end to it.

The participants identified some aspects where rural communication concept could work effectively to redress the situation.

Studio techniques such as calling for the microphone, voice control, and studio ethics and how to use an audio recorder constituted the bulk of the second presentation.

The second presentation was also followed by a series of questions and answers and lasted for 2 Hours.

The participants had lunch and together and the day ended with the reading of the report for Day 1

Day 2

Day two was basically kept aside for the practical exercises and the formation of a regional Network of National Languages Broadcasters

The participants were divided in to two groups with each group assigned the task of subdividing in to two groups, identify a problem and use rural communication techniques to redress the problem identified

The first group identified the problem of shortage of cocoyam in a local area while the other group examined the low yield of maize in a locality

Interviews with farmers and agricultural experts were carried out in Pidgin, as a common National Language.

The feeds were put together and all the participants went to the studio for the practical production.

In the studio, all that was explained during the theoretical part in day 1 was implemented.

At the end the programmes were recorded, edited and each participant had a copy.

2.3) Formation Of Network

After the production of the Programmes, the next item was formation of a network for National (Vernacular) languages Broadcasters

After a series of deliberations, the participants accepted that the Network be called, NALABRA, meaning, National Language Broadcasters Association.

The objectives enlisted by the participants, included, but not limited to,

- ✓ To bring all National Language Broadcasters together
- ✓ To facilitate sources for funding for individual radio stations and the group.
- ✓ To translate government policies to the grass root population
- ✓ Project news reporting in the domain of holistic development
- ✓ To improve broadcast skills through capacity building.

The elections of the executive bureau of the new born association saw the following participants elected.

Name	Position	Radio/ Locality
Ekane Peter	President	Eden Radio Limbe
Regina Kotto	Vice President	Bonakanda Radio Buea
Secretary General	Samuel Ngoh	Ocean City Kumba
Financial Secretary	Felix Eyuka	CRTV Buea
Treasurer	Peter Ekoi	Lake side Radio Kumba
PRO	Tayong Elvis	Ocean City Radio Kumba

Eden Radio’s CEO, Zachee NzohNgandembou and the main facilitator, Paul Kode were asked by the newly elected executive to be the advisers of the network while patrons were to be appointed in the months ahead.

Dinner followed the closing remarks by the CEO of Eden Radio and all participants were given their transportation allowance and they returned to their various destinations satisfied and determined to be more productive henceforth in the quality of information that they disseminate.

2.4) Reactions From Participants in South West

Immediate reactions from participants after the 2 day workshop were very positive.

Some of the participants whom we sampled their impressions about the project said, they were very delighted with the training adding that, they were broadcasting without basic knowledge in journalism

According to Eyuka Felix of CRTV Buea, though he has been broadcasting in his native Balongo language for the past 4 years, the training has given him the possibility to work in the recording studio and for the first time he has been able to edit his own interviews.

A similar view was raised by Atabong Peter of Lake Side Radio, who added that, the he has learnt a lot on poverty alleviation techniques and how to relate it to his native Bangwa people in a way which is going to alleviate poverty.

Fah Elvis Tayong of Ocean City Radio and Peter Kum Geh, appreciated the efforts by WACC through Eden Radio for the initiative but regretted that they could hardly afford a digital audio recorder, hence it may be difficult to implement the knowledge to a hundred percent.

All the participants however left the workshop ground, determined to use the knowledge they have gathered to be able to contribute their bit to the global objective of cutting poverty by half by the year 2015.

3) **North West Regional Workshop 15-16 April 2010**
Presbyterian Church Centre Conference Hall, Mankon Bamenda

The second workshop was organised in Bamenda for the North West Region on 15 and 16 April 2010 at the Presbyterian Church Centre, Mankon and brought together 50 National Language Broadcasters from all the seven Divisions of the North West Region.

Participants arrived Bamenda on Wednesday 14 April and registration of participants began as early as 8 am on Thursday 15 April at the workshop venue. Business proper kicked off at 10:30 am after a formal opening ceremony chaired by the Divisional Delegate of Communication for Mezam, Tabe Joan Manyi in the presence of the CEO OF Eden Radio, Chief *Nhon Zachee Nzoh Ngandembou* and the Resource person, Christopher Fogwe.

The CEO of Eden Chief *Nhon Zachee Nzoh-Ngandembou*, while welcoming the participants, said for a very long time, the work done by vernacular broadcasters has not been recognized though they contribute greatly to informing the poorest of the poor in our community.

He went down memory lane to point out that CRTV Buea started vernacular broadcasting decades ago followed by CRTV Bamenda. With the increasing literacy level, he continued, there is dire need to valorise the national languages which remains very vital for development and the projection and preservation of our cultural heritage.

According to him, the vernacular broadcasters, most of whom have little or no formal education need to sharpen their skills to continue to carry out this very important mission especially given the fact that they have talents which need to be harnessed.

Thus, he concluded at the end of the workshop all participants should be able to gather and disseminate information right to the grassroots on the things that affect them.

In her opening address, the Divisional Delegate of Communication for Mezam, Mrs. Tabe Joan Manyi lauded Eden Radio for choosing the North West Region to host the project. According to her, the number of radio stations in the North West region is increasing on a daily basis but this has not been commensurate to the empowerment of local people.

Thus the workshop, she said would be a golden opportunity for the radios to bring the rural population of the North West Region onto the wider national development debate especially as the Region remains the cultural hub of the country.

She further said government is already making significant strides to supporting media outfits that are into development communication

The official opening ceremony was followed by a coffee break and a press briefing

During the briefing the Chief Executive Officer of Eden Radio explained to press men what the project was all about, the partners, benefits and how all concerned can help sustain the initiative beyond the workshop.

The briefing was followed by the working session under the auspices of the trainer Christopher Fogwe, veteran journalist, media consultant and station manager of foundation radio, Bamenda

3.1) Presentation 1- Basic Information Gathering Skills

Chris Fogwe expounded on

- What is news

- Types of news

- News gathering

- News writing

- News dissemination

The facilitator drew concrete examples from CRTV Local language broadcasts, Afrique Nouvelle Radio “Good Morning Neighbour” radio programmes amongst others. Chris Fogwe used the example of Cameroon Baptist Convention (CBC) Radio,

Bamenda which using local languages to spread the Gospel of Christ including music interviews in vernacular amongst others.

He delved into what development is all about, identified effective tools for communication and discussed government policy .

He also discussed the management of local language news and other effective tools of communicating

Other values he stressed include complete mastery of language, knowledge of tradition and customs etc.

The question and answer session which followed gave participants the opportunity to raise some problems encountered in the exercise of their duties. Some include lack of equipment, lack of access to information and some customs and traditions.

The trainer also explained what pro-poor information is and how its dissemination can help fight poverty amongst the masses. The participants also brainstormed and identified some problems which are peculiar to poor people and how the dissemination of pro-poor information can help resolve them. Some of the issues identified included farmer-grazer conflicts chieftaincy squabbles, food insecurity, low agricultural yields, and poor access to market information on agricultural produce, and production and distribution of planting material.

The lectures which began at 11 am wrapped up at 1pm when the participants were split into two groups for discussions on pro-poor information gathering and identification of the kind of information that the poor need to be empowered.

The discussions wrapped up at 2pm when lunch was served

3.2) Presentation 2- Production and Dissemination of Pro poor Programmes

When lunch was over at 3pm the participants were drilled on

- Rural communication and conception
- Broadcast techniques
- Studio techniques

- Voice control
- Basic techniques in editing
- How to use an audio recorder

Studio techniques such as calling for the microphone, voice control, and studio ethics and how to use an audio recorder constituted were highlighted. The participants also visited the Radio Production Studio of the Presbyterian Church Centre where they were briefed on both digital and analogue editing.

They were also schooled on how to use the various studio equipments as well as select information while editing. The two hour deliberation wrapped up at 5pm when day one deliberations ended

Day 2

Day 2 deliberations started at 8 am with roll call. Even though by 8:30 am, some members had not come, restitution of the work of the first day was done with some of the participants admitting having conceived ideas on topical issues which would be used to produce micro-programmes.

By the time the restitution ended at 9 am, all the 50 participants were present.

Coffee was served at 9:10 am and by 9:45 participants mobilized for studio production.

The participants who had already been divided into two groups the previous day proceeded to the studios for the production of micro programmes

The first group chose bushfires, and slash and burnt locally known as “Ankara” as the subject for the micro-programme.

The group members simulated the stakeholders in the crisis that come with these practices how it is adversely affecting agricultural yields, climate and soil fertility hence promoting poverty.

The micro-programme also proposed possible solutions and modern agricultural practices which are sustainable.

The studio production and editing ended at 11 am.

The second group worked on farmer –grazer conflicts in the North West Region. Like the first group, they simulated the stakeholders in the conflict, assessed the damage caused by grazers to crop farmers and vice versa, weighed the stakes on both sides and looked at possible solutions which can acceptable for the livestock farmers and crop farmers, and why both need to dialogue for their mutual benefit especially over land ownership and management.

The studio production and editing ended at midday.

Thereafter, the first group listened to the work of the second and vice versa. The exercise took 30 minutes and at 12: 30, all participants returned to the conference hall for evaluation of the micro –programmes.

Between 12: 30 pm and 2:00 pm, the participants evaluated what they learnt the previous day and were putting into practice.

They used the micro-programmes to test their knowledge on news gathering, treatment, dissemination, studio ethics, production techniques and quality amongst others. One common local language-pidgin was used in the two programmes to enable all participants understand it.

Launch was announced at 2 pm

3.3) Formation of Vernacular Language Broadcasters Association

When the participants reconvened at 3pm, the issue was the formation of an association.

Three names were proposed

- Network of Cameroon National Language Broadcasters
- Network of North West National Language Broadcasters
- Cameroon Association of National Language Broadcasters

After voting, the last option, Cameroon Association of National Language Broadcasters, abbreviated CANALAB grabbed 30 of the 50 votes to carry the day

Next was the election of the pioneer executive body of the association.

After identifying the posts to be contested, a jury was set up to conduct the elections.

After highly contested elections, the following persons were voted into office

Name	Position	Radio/ Locality
Atachwi Waye Henry	President	CRTV Bamenda
Maurice Tagyem	Vice President	Foundation Radio
Abongwa Fozo	Secretary General	Afrique Nouvelle Radio,
Elisabeth Manoji	Treasurer	Foundation Radio, Bamenda
Akumbom Elvis Mcarthy	Publicity secretary	Afrique Nouvelle
Hilary Assombang	Financial Secretary	Foundation Radio, Bamenda
Christopher Fogwe Teke Humphrey	Advisers	Foundation Radio CRTV

After the elections the newly elected executive scheduled a date for a meeting during which they will define the objectives of the association and how to attain them.

Certificates were handed over to participants after which the CEO of Eden, Chief Zachee Nzoh Ngandembou formally closed the workshop at 5pm and all participants and guests were treated to supper before leaving.

3.4) Reactions From Participants in North West

Just like the participants in the South West, the North West Vernacular broadcasters had similar impressions.

North West, with a more rural population than the South West, the participants saw a greater need to inform their people in the languages they understood better.

Hillary Asombang of Foundation Radio, Bamenda reacts that, not only has the training been beneficial to his Radio station, it has made him realise that there were so many things he was neglecting in broadcasting.

Majority of them revealed that though they have been broadcasting in the vernacular languages for more than a decade nobody nor institution has ever thought of seeing their importance in poverty alleviation and the development process of the country. They believed they were being neglected in whole process though they are in direct contact with the people.

According to Fung John of the CBC Radio, the training came as an eye opener and hopes other like minded organisations would continue from where the present one ended.

Dugari Patrick of Ngoketunjia was very impressed with the way the longstanding farmer-grazer problem was treated using the skills gathered from the training

To him, the problem which has plagued the North West Region for over 20 years now will be a thing of the past thanks to the *WACC- Eden Radio* partnership

4) Observations

4.1) Results

At the end of the project, the following results were attained,

- ✓ A data base of Rural and Local Radio stations in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon particularly those that emphasise the use of local languages in their programming was created.
- ✓ The Government of Cameroon, through the delegates have seen and realised the need to empower the vernacular broadcasters in a bid to fight poverty.
- ✓ More than 98% of the target population attended the trainings in the both regions.
- ✓ Increased programme production skills among vernacular broadcasters hence improved programme quality and content.
- ✓ Increased income to rural families and an attendant increase in living standards
- ✓ 20 Pro-Poor Micro Programmes were produced
- ✓ The formation of National Languages Broadcasters Association (NALABRA) in the South West and Cameroon Association of National Languages Broadcasters, (CANALAB) with an executive committee

4.2) Constraints

- Some Radio stations lacked full time vernacular broadcasters and it gave us a problem of getting vernacular broadcasters from all the stations in the two regions
- The Project intended to provide basic technical assistance to the vernacular broadcasters in the forms of Tape recorders, headphones etc, however due to the limited funds granted for the project, that aspect was left out.

4.3) Proposals

- Extend workshop to three days with emphasis of field exercise
- Provision of equipment to facilitate news gathering and reporting
- Institutional strengthening of National Languages Broadcasters Associations
- Institutional support and capacity building to the implementing organisation- *Eden Radio*
- Replication of project in the other 8 Regions to ensure a National Status

4.4) Conclusion and Way Forward

The project to train vernacular broadcasters on gathering, producing and disseminating pro-poor information and programmes, stemmed from the fact that not only after 1990 when the media sector was liberalised in Cameroon, the dissemination of information was preponderantly the monopoly of the government –owned media (Radio, TV and Newspaper) whose news content centred on government activities and propaganda to the near exclusion of development-oriented news from the grassroots.

Independent research also has it that, the rural masses could hardly get access to information because of poor circulation outreach of the lone state newspaper and poor audio-visual network.

However, the advent of liberalisation has had a completely paradigm shift within the media landscape. The emergence of a plethora of community and rural radio stations has brought in added impetus in the media sector. There is not only diversity in the content of news disseminated to both the rural and urban population, but access to information also made much easier especially with an increased use of national languages.

While broadcasting in vernacular language is good in itself, we saw an absolute need to update, improve and sustain their skills.

We realised that of these broadcasters have been to school while others are retired persons with hidden talents that should be enhanced and strengthened.

The results from the workshops and reactions from the participants, coupled with reactions from vernacular broadcasters in the other eight regions of the country which the project did not target, point to the fact that a lot has been done by WACC through Eden Radio to use communication to alleviate poverty.

The worry from the rest of the regions and from popular polls is that, the training should be extended to the rest of the nation and for the existing networks to strengthened so that by 2015, their goals of using communication to cut poverty by halve would have been attained.