

Prospects and Challenges for independent, non-profit, non-partisan public and community broadcasters in Africa



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Introduction

- The World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters, AMARC conducted a long-range participatory action research seeking to identify the barriers that limit the potential positive impact of community radio and explore ways to increase the effectiveness of community radio in achieving poverty reduction, development objectives, inclusiveness and democracy building in local communities.

Key principles of the Community Radio Global Review:

- To increase effectiveness of CR in achieving Millennium Development Goals;
- Recognize *voicelessness and powerlessness as key dimensions of poverty*;
- Address the contribution of CR to accountability, equity and civil rights;
- Ensure the full and effective participation of women; Be participatory and inclusive of marginalized groups;

Key findings on the Community Radio Global Review:

- *The lack of proper enabling legislation is the single principal barrier to CR broadcasters in Africa. The absence of a friendly legislation; the existence of media oppression and military threats are a generalized barrier to the development of community radio.*
- On varying degrees, these factors hinder CR capacity to develop its positive impact in giving voice to the marginalized, in developing inclusive and democratic societies where governments are accountable and people are empowered to achieve development objectives.
- Likewise, the absence of appropriate legislation recognizing the social contribution of CR, creates financial sustainability challenges that hinder the possibility for scaling up good models of sustainable CR.
- Community radio is a distinct media sector and a vital alternative to state owned public broadcaster and commercial private media.
- Communities have sought in community radio a means to express their own issues, concerns, cultures and languages. The expansion of CR is the result of the reduction of diversity of voices that accompany the formation of media conglomerates that accompanies the globalization processes.

Key findings on the Community Radio Global Review:

- *Community Radio Sustainability is a global challenge. In spite of increasing positive experiences of socially sustainable CR, financial and technological sustainability remain a challenge that often distract CR practitioners from dedicating themselves to ameliorate radio production, increase community participation and pertinence of programming.*
- Community radio faces important sustainability challenges regarding capacity building, and in enhancing local ownership.
- Knowledge sharing on best experiences across regions as well as increased use of new ICTs can make a difference.

Key findings on the Community Radio Global Review:

- *Community Radio Networks and knowledge sharing are weak. Even though* community radio has become a global sector, interaction and exchange between regions is weak and systematic impact assessment is rare.
- A multifaceted challenge for community radio is the need to strengthen its own networks and communications.
- There is a need to embed appropriate assessment tools, to document and disseminate good practice and to strengthen network development through institutional capacity building and communications

In order to remove barriers and increase its effectiveness the CR sector needs to:

- (1) Advocate and do policy research to achieve improvement in the policy, legal and regulatory environment for community media, but specifically community sound broadcasting services ;
- (2) Increase knowledge sharing and capacity building in the CR sector to strengthen the sustainability, effectiveness and relevance of community media;
- facilitating the appropriation of community media by excluded and marginalized communities to better identify, discuss, articulate and voice their development concerns;
- (3) Develop content exchange and social action campaigns in order to amplify the voices of the excluded and marginalized in sustainable development and to strengthen democracy education;
- (4) effectively support gender equality, women rights and voices to combat gender based discrimination and to strengthen women's participation in community media at all levels;
- (5) Reinforce the CR Network and communications and to strengthen alliances between community media and other networks and social movements, as well as by strengthening and harmonizing AMARC international and regional structures functioning

CIMA, Community Radio: Its Impact and Challenges to its Development, *Working Group Report, October 9,*

- “The impact of independent media on society is cross-cutting and encompassing, and thus should be regarded as a unique development sector. Within media development, it is essential to focus on community radio as a powerful source for empowerment, especially for disenfranchised and marginalized groups in society. Research efforts to quantify, analyze, and draw conclusions regarding the impact of community radio are essential and can serve as a sound basis for assistance advocacy.”

- [CIMA, Center for International Media

Assistance]

CIMA, Community Radio: Its Impact and Challenges to its Development, *Working Group Report, October 9,*

- Financial sustainability is a major challenge for community radio stations. Possible solutions to boost struggling community radio efforts include a well-coordinated pooled funding source, or a microcredit loan system for community radio development that is not subject to donor priorities.

CIMA, Community Radio: Its Impact and Challenges to its Development, *Working Group Report, October 9,*

- Networks of community radio stations can serve as effective and efficient fora for exchange of programming, creation of national news, and information programs. Professional associations can play a vital role in establishing professional codes of ethics, identifying training needs, and establishing training programs. They can also serve as advocates for the sector, soliciting more funds for development. Associations and networks can thus become focal points for donor assistance.