

A Study Into Sustainable Community Broadcasting in Zimbabwe

**ZACRAS
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Chapter 1

Definition of Key Terms

Defining Financial Sustainability for Community Radio Initiatives

"Sustainability" has become a popular catchword in recent years. The word itself is subject to various interpretations. In an oft-cited phrase, the Bruntland Commission' defined "sustainability" to be "*development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*" While it is not typically stated explicitly, the basic underlying concept behind most notions of sustainability in development literature would appear to be some implicit measure of an entity's generalized capacity to produce economic well-being over time. In this paper "sustainability" is defined to be the annualized equivalent of the present discounted value of consumption that a community radio station is capable of achieving. More precisely, "sustainability" of a non profit making institution is the hypothetical constant or "annuity-equivalent" level of consumption that would yield the same present discounted value as the actual consumption trajectory the community radio station is able to deliver. In this context, "sustainable community broadcasting" might refer to a time path whose "sustainability" over the future is never less than its current consumption.

As shown in the preceding paragraph, broadly, *sustainability* will refer to the ability of community radio initiatives' administrators to operational, expand and maintain an organization over the long term. However, the definition of *financial sustainability* may vary widely between for-profit organizations and nonprofits, defined as organizations that use surplus revenues to achieve their goals rather than distributing them as profit or dividends (ZACRAS 2012), depending on the business structure, revenue structure, and overarching goal of the organization. For both for-profit and non-profit organizations, *financial capacity* consists of resources that give an organization the ability to seize opportunities and react to unexpected threats while maintaining general

operations of the organization (Bowman, 2011). It reflects the degree of managerial flexibility to reallocate assets in response to opportunities and threats.

Financial sustainability refers to the ability to maintain financial capacity over time (Bowman, 2011). Regardless of an organization's for-profit or non-profit status, the challenges of establishing financial capacity and financial sustainability are central to organizational function (Bowman, 2011). However, maintaining the ability to be financially agile over the long term may be especially important for community radio initiatives, given that many of them serve high-need communities that require consistent and continually available services against a backdrop of ever dwindling donor resources and changing priorities.

With this in mind, the goal of financial sustainability for community radio initiatives is to maintain or expand services within their respective communities while developing resilience to occasional economic shocks in the short term (e.g. short-term loss of program funds, monthly/annual variability in donations). According to Bowman (2011), an organization that is sustainable in the long term but unsustainable in the short term is chronically short of cash, conversely, an organization that is sustainable in the short term but not in the long term may have adequate cash but inflation will cause the value of its assets to erode over time. This, in turn, will cause the quantity and quality of services to diminish unless capital campaigns periodically bring infusions of new assets. (p. 94)

Linking Financial Sustainability and Organizational Functioning and Success

To understand differences in factors related to financial sustainability between for-profit and non-profit organizations, it is important to identify and understand the long-term goals of the community radio station. For instance, the ultimate strategic goal of for-profit organizations is to acquire profit and market share, whereas community radio Initiatives' financial outcomes are merely a means to accomplishing an organization's social mission (Hackler and Saxton, 2007). Thus, a community radio station's ability to

pursue its mission (i.e., providing consistent and quality programming and services) and its financial sustainability are inextricably linked. **CR** may gain the majority of their revenue from charitable contributions, community membership subscriptions (either monthly, quarterly or annually), social advertising related to the work that other community development initiatives may intend to raise awareness (the advertising rates are gifts and donations and NOT commercial rates or for the purposes of marketing commercial services and products) donor funding or tax appropriations in the event of government social grants extended as is the norm in functional states and measure efficiency and effectiveness of their operations in their success at achieving their social mission, which is their ultimate strategic goal. This, in turn, creates public value (Hackler and Saxton, 2007; Moore, 2000). However, in contrast to for-profit organizations, community radio initiatives face the challenge of balancing the need for '*social profitability*' over the long term (as a means to support their programs and services) with the need to promote and prioritize their social mission. For community radio Initiatives, the ultimate goal is to prioritize the broadcasting of community development initiatives and critically plans that identify opportunities to manage short-term financial flux while making progress toward meeting long-term social and financial objectives.

Lived Realities: Balancing Financial Sustainability with the Community Radio Station's Mission

More aid is being promised to tackle poverty, especially in Africa. This is welcome and urgently needed. However, little attention has been paid to understanding whether current aid disbursement mechanisms are appropriate to building autonomous, strong local organisations and communities. Donors are getting more prescriptive in the way that they fund non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and have tightened the requirements for accessing, using and accounting for aid. This is partly due to concerns about corruption in developing countries and to try to exert control over the development process to meet the targets set in the developed world. An international research team from Oxford Brookes University in the UK, the University of Natal in South Africa, Makerere University in Uganda and ActionAid Uganda has built on their earlier work on 'the standardisation of development' and explored the tensions created by the current terms and conditions of donor funding. The research is based on work in the UK, Uganda and South Africa but has relevance and resonance beyond Africa. The research found that current approaches do not match stated commitments to participation, local ownership and building a

strong civil society. Most NGOs follow dominant donor agendas - either willingly or for survival - and policymakers are reluctant to even ask questions about the impact of financial policy and procedures on development work. (ELDIS, 2013 Accessed on: <http://www.eldis.org/id21ext/s8ctw1g1.html>)

For most community radio Initiatives , a core challenge is balancing (1) the need to maintain financial sustainability and (2) the pursuit of the broadcasting mission and maintenance of consistent and quality programming over time. On one hand, examining these factors as separate or competing goals produces an artificial distinction that may hinder long-term growth; on the other hand, determining the effective combination of efforts, activities, and staff at a viable cost per participant eludes many program administrators:

It's not enough [for nonprofits] to have a high-impact program if there's no effective strategy for sustaining the organization financially. And neither is it enough to be financially stable. . . . Yet surprisingly, in the non-profit sector financial information and information about mission impact are seldom discussed in an integrated way. Instead, financial reports and analysis rarely include data about what impacts have been driven by a particular financial activity. Moreover, program evaluations and progress reports are discussed out of context with funding streams, profitability, and financial sustainability. (Bell, Masoka, and Zimmerman, 2010, p. 3)

Distinct from a traditional for-profit broadcasting model that focuses primarily on making a profit for the benefit of owners and shareholders, community radio Initiatives should make assessments in terms of their profitability *and* their social mission impact (Bell, Masoka, and Zimmerman, 2010). Specifically, community radio Initiatives should determine whether or not their programmatic activities are producing the desired result (i.e., effectiveness) and whether the results are adequate in proportion to the cost of effort (i.e., efficiency). For community radio Initiatives , *profitability* reflects maintenance of working capital to support or continue operations of programs and services. In contrast, *mission impact* involves a focus on programs that align more strongly with the core mission, demonstrate excellence in execution, have a broad reach or deeply impact a smaller number of individuals, fill an important gap in the community, illustrate strong community building, and increase the impact of other programs in the organization or community. In non-profit organizations, there is an

implicit assumption that all programs or activities drive toward the organization's mission; however, some programs have higher impact than others (Bell, Masoka, and Zimmerman, 2010).

Evaluating activities and operations along these dimensions of profitability and mission impact, as well as the interaction between these two dimensions, may allow community radio initiatives to develop strategic plans to manage short-term financial challenges while maintaining long-term mission goals.

Chapter 2

Methodology

The researcher was guided by a step by step methodology which provided for a continuous process of inputs and feedback from and to stakeholders for the communicative production of the research report on key operational, financial and technical sustainability of community radio initiatives. The key elements of the methodology included desk review, regional and international case studies, participatory consultations, and validation process.

- a. **Documents Review:** the researcher undertook a desk review and consolidation of existing national legislative and policy documents from key government ministries, media organisations, local and regional community radio Initiatives , and secondary literature addressing community radio Initiatives ' issues.
 - b. Documents and internet searches: the ZACRAS and its stakeholders assisted the consultant to access key documents
 - c. Analysis and synthesis of documents: the study undertook an analysis and synthesis of documents and literature on sustainability.
- 🚩 **Case Studies:** the study features an inclusion of case studies (text boxes and or short individual studies) in the Sustainability Report. These case studies serve to showcase workable and scalable community radio initiatives in Zimbabwe, the region and international community.
- 🚩 **Participatory Consultations:** the researcher undertook a process of participatory consultations with selected stakeholders. These entailed key informant interviews, focus group discussions, workshops and meetings with various stakeholders in the community radio Initiatives sector to get first hand information on the status,

viability, challenges and proposed self reliant (funding) initiatives that ZACRAS members in particular and community radios in general can adopt.

Objectives of the Literature Review

The recent economic downturn and increasing expectations to demonstrate the value and effectiveness of programs and services have exacerbated the myriad of challenges faced by nonprofits in their efforts to establish and define sustainability over the long term. Given an overreliance on external funds and sources of funds, many nonprofits have difficulty generating income, sustaining financial support, and meeting their target populations' needs. These challenges are particularly salient for nonprofits that serve vulnerable, high-need, and low income populations, because such nonprofits tend to more heavily rely on grants and donations than on membership fees or fee-for-service. Moreover, nonprofits serving low-resourced or low income communities are faced with balancing multiple community challenges that reach far beyond the mission of the organization (e.g., economic challenges, poor education, poor health, crime or safety issues, housing concerns, lack of business or community development, unique cultural contexts). If a non profit organization is to improve its decision making regarding financial sustainability, administrators must understand the challenges they face in maintaining funds to support organizational activities in the long term while meeting the needs of their target populations, and they must utilize promising practices to overcome these challenges.

Approach to Literature Review on Non-Profit Sustainability Challenges

The researcher conducted systematic literature searches using a combination of academic search engines and the broader Internet. For searches of the literature on challenges of sustainability and program engagement faced by other community radio Initiatives , the researcher used search engines that included Google, Google Scholar, Web of Social Science, and Grey Literature. Literature search for studies related to sustainability for non-profit organizations, with an emphasis on urban, minority-focused, or lower-resourced organizations, used SCOPUS, Web of Social Science, Econlit, and Grey Literature. The SCOPUS and Web of Science searches contained two categories of search terms, which were joined by an “and” condition:

1. Understanding Sustainable advocacy and lobby initiatives

AND

2. “strategic assessment” OR evaluation OR “community engagement” OR financing OR funding OR sustainability OR “membership engagement” OR flagship OR barrier OR excellence OR “community assessment” OR “strategic plan.” In total, when duplicates and obviously irrelevant articles were excluded, this systematic search identified 108 articles for review. Due to the limited search results, we modified the search criteria to include a wider range of nonprofit organizations (i.e., we added “nonprofit” as a search term) and used an additional search engine that focused on financial and economic literature.

The EconLit search contained two categories of search terms, all of which were joined by “and” conditions:

1. Community radios

AND

2. “strategic assessment” OR evaluation OR “community engagement” OR financing OR funding OR sustainability OR “membership engagement” OR flagship OR barrier OR excellence OR “community assessment” OR “strategic plan” OR “fund raising” OR “outcome” OR “organizational performance” OR “fund-raising” After we removed duplicate references and articles that were deemed irrelevant, the systematic search in EconLit identified 232 articles for review. In total, the two systematic searches together resulted in 340 potentially relevant references. In addition to the systematic search, we identified 17 potentially relevant books that included sections pertinent to UNESCO search.

To determine eligibility for review, the researcher individually screened the titles and article abstracts, retaining only those articles that appeared to contain elements that would inform the review of sustainability models and challenges to sustainability faced by non-profit organizations in general and community radio stations in particular. Specifically, the researcher indicated whether the articles fit into one of three categories: highly relevant (i.e., directly addresses issues of sustainability for non-profit organizations), indirectly relevant (i.e., could inform the general discussion but does not

explicitly apply to elements of sustainability), or not relevant (i.e., does not inform the review). When comparing recommendations, the researcher retained articles for review under the following conditions:

- (1) If the reviewer marked an article as highly relevant (n = 65);
- (2) If the reviewer marked an article as marked it as indirectly relevant (n = 10); and
- (3) If the researcher marked it as indirectly relevant (n = 4).

In total, 79 articles were retained for review. In addition, the researcher determined 13 of the 17 books to be relevant to the review. After careful review of the 79 articles and 13 books, the researcher selected 36 articles and three books that were most informative to the review on sustainability and could inform promising practices for nonprofits serving high-need populations. Figure 1.1 provides an overview of the systematic literature search and the results.

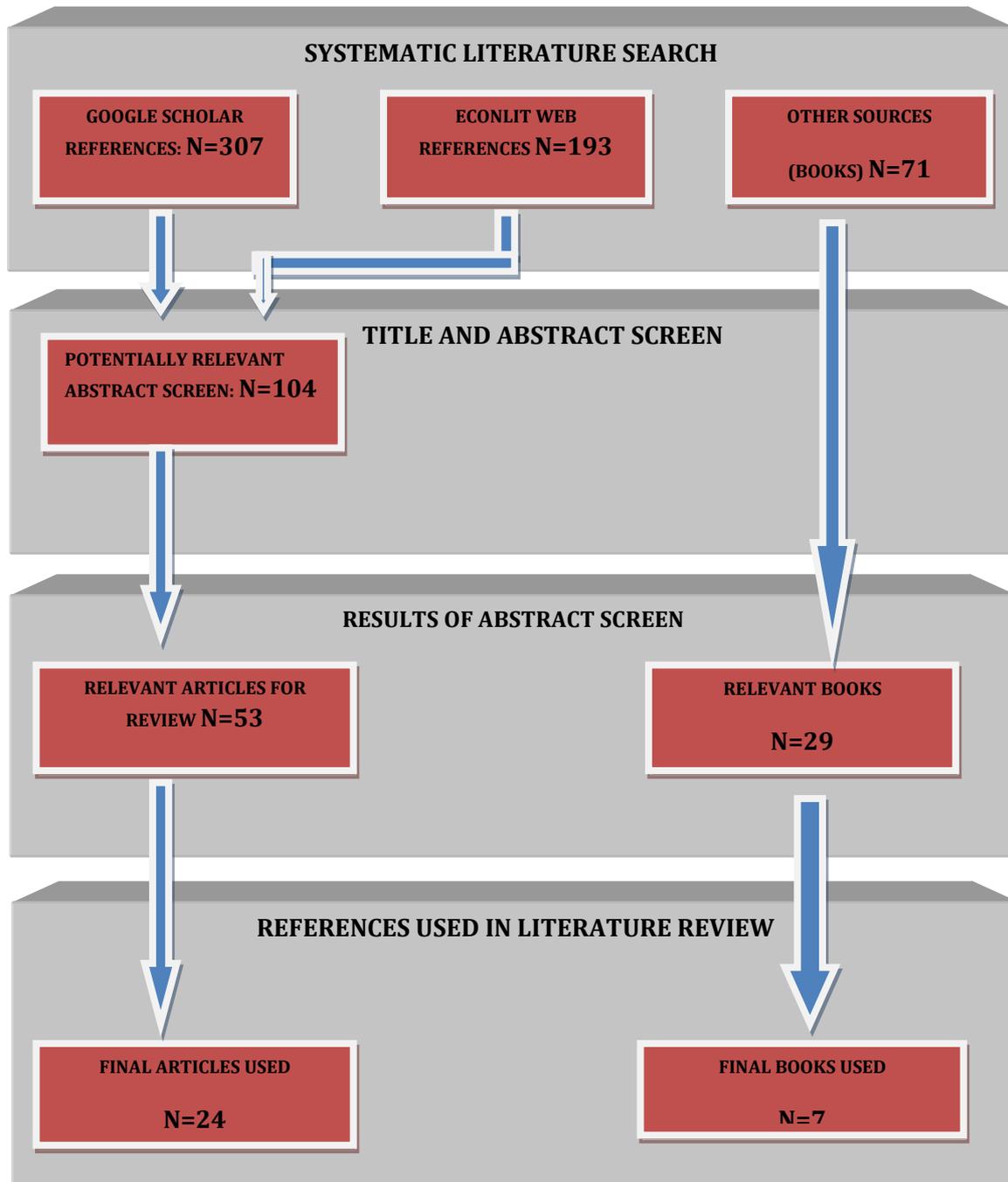
Organization of Literature Review on Sustainability Challenges for Community Radio Initiatives

From the review of the relevant literature, the study identifies and discusses major challenges of financial sustainability for community radio initiatives and general non profits, synthesizes key lessons learnt related to these challenges, and identifies potential practices to overcome these challenges. Due to a dearth of studies on non-profit organizational process that adhere to the “gold standard” of research (i.e., large-scale, representative studies on many organizations), this literature review is based on a literature that draws largely from case studies or summaries of operational activities within particular community radio Initiatives and drawing examples from regional and international cases. In successive chapters the study identifies major challenges of financial and technical sustainability faced by community radio initiatives and best practises to address these challenges. Subsequently the paper will identify unique challenges for rural and minority populations community radio initiatives which characteristically serve low-income populations such as Ntepe and discuss the implications that these challenges have for strategies to address the challenges related to financial and technical sustainability. The paper also draws a score sheet on issues

discussed that leads to concluding remarks and discusses strategies and future directions of the literature on financial sustainability for ZACRAS and its affiliate community radio initiatives .

Figure 1.1. Literature Review Results for Financial Sustainability for CR

Organization of Review on Sustainability Challenges for Community Radio Initiatives



Key:

N = QUANTITY OF ARTICLES USED/REVIEWED

Chapter 3

Problem Scenario

Zimbabwe has a new constitution that was adopted in March 2013 following a negotiated political settlement that ended with elections of 31st July 2013. In respect to ZACRAS and community radio initiatives the new constitution provides an avenue of lobby and advocacy as well as awareness raising on the permissibility of community broadcasting which obliges the state to remove restrictions that unnecessarily inhibit community broadcasting

Legislative	Technical and Adm
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Laws Such As AIPPA, Public Order and Security Act hinder gatherings with communities ❖ Services Act stifles transformation of community radio initiatives given cumbersome registration process. The following are the requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. registration fee b. represent the registration case before BAZ c. definition of community limits the scope of a community in development terms d. External Funding ❖ registered as trusts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Restrictive National Broadcasting ❖ Standard In ❖ Struggles w ❖ US\$10000.00 ❖ expertise in ❖ Legal Attorney to ❖ in fundraisi ❖ Government's ❖ trained volu ❖ Restrictions on ❖ broadcastin ❖ Most initiatives are a. b. c. Meeting d. ❖ Evaluation s ❖ organisation

Financial	Operational Environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Limited Funding to suit Administrative Costs ❖ High dependency on the ZACRAS Platform for Funding and External Donor Funding ❖ Limited Office Space – an average of US\$700.00 in rentals is required for a studio and two offices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ from State S ❖ stigmatised ❖ in governm ❖ initiatives' c ❖ makes it di ❖ economy an ❖ Voices in Co ❖ to be recipie

Confronting the Challenge

Acknowledging these challenges ZACRAS members have in the interim introduced the following measures to maintain visibility in their communities:

- ❖ Increasing local membership with a view of introducing subscriptions
- ❖ Creating partnerships with private business enterprises to promote a culture of giving back to the community through development initiatives
- ❖ Improving financial management
- ❖ Rejuvenating idle social marketing departments and initiatives
- ❖ Strengthening Financial Committees
- ❖ Lobby and Advocacy Initiatives to amend the BSA and conform with the provisions of the new constitution

This paper will explore these and other viable alternatives to sustainable operations of community radio initiatives in greater depth drawing regional and international examples.

A brief overview of the legal status of community radio internationally

A scan of community radio legislation around the world finds a sector dominated by a lack of cohesive policy. There are countries with well-established community radio sectors (Australia, South Africa) and countries where community radio is still not recognized (Japan, Chile). In recent history countries as diverse as Argentina, Bolivia, Uganda, India, Bangladesh and the United Kingdom have adopted reforms that assist community media. Where there is no licensed community radio, there are often thriving landscapes of unlicensed community stations. In Thailand, for example, there is currently no way for local groups to apply for a licence, but there are an estimated 4,000 to 7,000 “pirate” radio stations. Even where there is legal community broadcasting, unlicensed “pirate radio” might still operate, because of limitations of national policy, lack of spectrum availability or because there are people who want to operate outside state infrastructure for ideological or political reasons. Some community radio stations operate under threat of harassment in highly volatile and dangerous conditions. In 2005 the government of Nepal imposed a ban on news and public affairs programming on commercial and community stations that lasted until overturned by the courts. In Mexico in 2008 two women journalists with community radio La Voz que Rompe el Silencio (the Voice that Breaks the Silence) were murdered en route to a public demonstration. In 2005, a community radio station in Paraguay was bombed. In other countries, regulation remains unclear or has built-in limitations. In Indonesia, community radio has had legal status since 2000, but there is no regulatory system in place. As a result there are about 500 community stations that are legal but unlicensed. In Bosnia, community radio licenses are available, but to date, not one application has been filed because (say college radio organizers) the law imposes so many limitations on funding that there is no way for stations to support themselves financially.

Definitions vary, but certain policy principles should be adhered to

There is no one single regulatory definition of community broadcasting. Policies focus on definitions emphasizing broadcasting that is not-for-profit, participatory, and made for and by a local audience. It makes sense that there is no “one size fits all” approach. The specific shape and feel of each national system will differ to because it reflects local conditions and cultures.

Characteristics which should be a part of any legal definition of community broadcasting include:

- ❖ independence from government and commercial entities;
- ❖ servicing either geographic communities or communities of interest;
- ❖ ownership and management by the people of the community; and
- ❖ Operating for social gain not private financial profit.

It is also important for policies to have some mechanism to counter corruption, or co-option by local elites. When community media become mouthpieces for local government they lose credibility. One way of preventing control by government, or perceptions of control, is to channel government support through an independent body.

The broader enabling environment and the function of an independent regulatory body

Community radio policies can only be as strong as the broader environment within which they operate. A strong media environment supports a free and open media, has safeguards for the rights of journalists and freedom of expression, rights of racial, ethnic, religious and other minorities and women, recognition of non-profit organizations and a legal system with the capacity to enforce these rights.

Another necessity is a functioning and independent regulatory agency, and transparency and fairness in licensing.

With respect to the function of the regulatory agency, the following criteria are necessary:

- ❖ The regulator should publish members’ interests and affiliations, proceedings of meetings, licensing decisions and reasons for those decisions;
- ❖ Public consultations should be held on licensing and regulatory policies, codes and procedures, and the annual plan and priorities of the regulatory body should also include input from community media advocates and practitioners;

- ❖ Major policy decisions should include a 3-stage public consultation process:
 - notice of a new decision that is to be made;
 - collection of public input on the possible decision, and
 - final decision issued publicly.

Sustainability and licensing processes

Certain principles in community radio licensing should be adhered to. Here is a compilation of key licensing principles that are recommended:

- ❖ Ensure fair and equitable distribution between public service, commercial and community broadcasters.

- ❖ Legislation should reserve a portion of radio frequency spectrum for non-profit community broadcasting (10-15% of the FM bandwidth is the norm, but 20% is ideal). Community stations should have minimal or no license fees. In Mali and Colombia, for example, the license fee for community radio stations is around US\$20. In Bolivia, community stations pay 10% of what commercial stations pay. By contrast, in Ghana, stations are expected to pay an application fee of US\$100, a licence fee of US\$2,000 and an annual fee of US\$800. High fees dramatically limit the spread of community stations.
 - ❖ Licensing processes for community radio should be fair, open, transparent, set out clearly in law. The importance of clear regulation from the outset can be seen in the case of South Africa, where the Independent Broadcasting Authority began issuing community broadcasting licences in 1995 but only clarified the regulatory framework in 1997. For two years, community stations operated in uncertainty and on temporary licences.
 - ❖ Criteria for application and selection should be established openly and in consultation with civil society and community radio practitioners.
 - ❖ Ownership of community stations should be limited to not-for-profit entities and stations should not be owned by individuals (some countries also ban ownership by political parties).
 - ❖ Local community ownership, management and composition of oversight committees and boards should be a requirement.
 - ❖ The least invasive technical limitations should be applied; arbitrary restrictions on coverage area, antenna height, or transmission power are not recommended.
 - ❖ The regulatory agency should have sufficient capacity to handle community radio applications.
 - ❖ Policy transparency includes specifying the technical characteristics of the service and duration of the license; requires stations to comply with general broadcast law and regulations; requires stations to provide the service proposed in the license application – and maintain characteristics of a community broadcasting service for the duration of the license period; and sets out sanctions in the event of non-compliance.

- ❖ Procedures for obtaining community radio broadcasting licences should include the elimination of unnecessary engineering studies.
- ❖ Regulators should set up a special support office or officers within the agency dedicated to assisting community radio stations (for example in Colombia and the United Kingdom); and should make technical expertise available to applicants and stations.
- ❖ Sufficient length of licenses – five year renewable licenses are standard.

There are also specific issues regarding the shape and form of the applications procedure and licensing process. India passed long awaited community radio legislation in 2006 - however, actual implementation of the policy has taken longer than expected. One issue of contention is the requirement that applicants must be legal not-for-profit entities registered as such for a minimum of three years. On one hand, it could be argued that this helps ensure that groups applying have roots in the communities they are hoping to serve. But in rural villages or areas where there may not be a history or context for formal non-profit registration, this could place serious limitations on who can apply.

Applicants should be required to specify the following:

- ❖ Legal status and membership of the applicant;
- ❖ Proposed coverage and intended audience;
- ❖ Content of the program service to be provided;
- ❖ Involvement of and accountability to the community;
- ❖ Proposals to ensure the delivery of social gain;
- ❖ Financial plans and sources of finance.

In Benin, an independent regulatory body (HAAC) is responsible for licensing of private radio and television services. The HAAC identifies community radio by range, focus on a specific community, use of specific languages, and focus on local information and mobilization, cultural development and further education. The HAAC publishes the list of available frequencies and publishes a call for applications from all sectors, public, private and commercial. Applications are processed and frequencies allocated based on the proposed program content and the viability of the service. Irish community radio policy is flexible on the question of ownership. It states that stations must be owned and operated by not-for-profit organizations, and that stations should provide for membership, management and operation by the community served. Under this model,

the station is accountable to the community and the community controls the station. But the model acknowledges that it might be unrealistic in all circumstances to expect groups to establish a separate legal ownership structure, and accepts that ownership and control are inseparable

Case Study: Rural Community Radios in Mali

Mali is a large, sparsely populated country with a thriving rural community radio sector serving a large majority of the rural population in local languages. Mali has tried different ways of introducing ICTs into rural areas, including the rural telephony, Internet, sound and television broadcasting. Of all of these attempts, the greatest impact both socially and economically has been through the establishment of local rural radio stations. As in most West African countries, broadcasting in Mali has traditionally been a state monopoly, with the ORTM (Office de Radiodiffusion au Television de Mali) broadcasting primarily French-language programming produced in Bamako to the entire country. The country's first independent radio station was established in 1988 in the remote community of Kayes, a product of a presidential decree. Start-up financing for Kayes Rural Radio came from an Italian NGO, but the station's sustainability was met by local sources and by a strong relationship with Malian expatriates living in France who regarded radio as a vehicle for their own communication with the community.

Following the introduction of multiparty democracy in 1991, Mali formally allowed private radio and television stations to operate and adopted one of the most democratic broadcast laws in Africa. Within a few years dozens of private radio stations, both commercial and community, were established, most of them local stations. Mali now has one of the strongest and most diverse radio systems in Africa. Fifteen years ago, the ORTM broadcast programming via repeater transmitters across the country. Now there are as many as 300 radio stations broadcasting local programming throughout the country in more than a dozen local languages.

Rural community radio operations

One reason for the sector's growth has been the absence of bureaucratic and financial hurdles in procuring a licence; if an individual or community has the funds for

equipment, they can start and operate a station. There are no license fees to establish a radio station, and the only requirements are citizenship and that a simple form is filled out to check for frequency availability and technical integrity of the application. If the proposal is technically sound and the requested frequency is available, the radio station is granted a license to use that frequency. Otherwise, a new frequency is allocated. Each year, a frequency allowance of about USD 20 is paid by each radio station. URTEL (*l'Union des Radios et Télévisions Libres du Mali*) is an organization that offers training and advocacy services to its 168 member stations throughout the country, including 121 community stations, 38 commercial stations, and nine religious ones. URTEL also offers advice to new stations; for example, it recommends a suggested package of studio and transmission equipment for a 250-watt station costing approximately USD 11,000.

While many of Mali's stations have received support from donor agencies, most of them are self-sufficient. The Netherlands, the FAO, USAID and the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie are agencies that have provided support. Even though the stations have received external support, local people have been involved at all stages, including with the projects' initial designs. In many cases the villagers themselves constructed the stations' buildings. Management is overseen by boards of directors and committees elected by the communities. Staff is hired locally, and women are actively involved at all levels. Language is an important issue in Mali. While French is the official language, many people, especially in rural areas, do not speak French. In 2004, some 90 per cent of the radio stations in Mali broadcast in local languages.

Success factors and ongoing challenges

The success of community radios can be explained by the accessibility of this medium; illiterate or preliterate, much of the population can listen to broadcasts in their own language. In an area of very high illiteracy, only oral means can ensure effective communication. Local stations have largely met the challenge of language barriers. On many stations, programs are broadcast not in Mali's official language (French) or in the widely spoken language (Bamana), but rather in the local language of that specific small area. The government's deliberate policy to encourage the emergence of local

broadcasters has also been important, especially in minimizing financial and bureaucratic hurdles.

However there are shortcomings of the community radio movement in Mali. For example, many of the radio broadcasters lack professional expertise. Also, many stations make do with archaic technical equipment, which constitutes a significant problem since they do not have the funds for replacement parts.

- From the ICT Regulation Toolkit – www.ictregulationtoolkit.org/en/index.html

Best Case Scenario: Creating Sustainable Community Radio Initiatives–Mozambique

Since the emergence of Community Broadcasting issues around sustainability have been a major setback and internationally UNESCO has been a key agent in helping develop community airwaves and initiatives. The following is a best case scenario in Mozambique following opening up of democratic spaces in post-Portuguese colonial times:

UNESCO is one of several development partners working to support the establishment of community radio in Mozambique. UNESCO is presently working to capacitate eight different communities in their wish to start a community radio since 1998. Besides from these 8 new Initiatives , UNESCO is supporting UNESCO Initiatives already on air, the creation of a women's community radio network and a national co-ordination forum for community radio. UNESCO got involved in this development as part of its implementation efforts within a major media development project, aimed at "Strengthening Democracy and Governance through Development of the Media in Mozambique".

Looking at Mozambique with literacy rates of 59% for men and a low 29% for women (1997 census), knowing that only a quarter of the population speaks the only common language, Portuguese, at a level sufficient to follow and understand fully a radio broadcast news bulletin in that language, taking into consideration the vastness of the country and its many distinctly different languages and cultures – along with the oral communication being both traditional, familiar and effective, community radio is a very appropriate response to the development issues at stake. In preparation of turning plans into reality, creating these powerful - yet fragile - institutions, we carried out a number of studies to assess sustainability potentials and obstacles. The studies provided us with details of what we expected and somehow already knew: that when moving outside of the urban centres, experience with the creation of organisational structures, let alone effectively managing these, was very weak, when not totally absent. We would therefore need to design a process, doing UNESCO utmost to establish effective mechanisms to create a sound foundation for success, basing ourselves as much as possible on local capacity and local organising experience available. At the same time, when looking around at the local/community radio Initiatives already established, we saw ample evidence of the challenges and obstacles identified: Initiatives being off the air for long periods of time due to lack of proper technical configurations (like lack of provision to protect against the general fluctuations and sudden surges in the electricity supply as well as lack of earthing protection mechanism against the effects of the frequent and powerful lightning 'attacks') and lack of effective financial and/or technical backup systems in place. This, combined with inadequately trained staff and usually a very fragile community-base for the radios, rendered such local radio Initiatives extremely vulnerable.

Chapter 4

The Study identifies decisive factors from the obtaining scenario and regional and international best cases to minimise vulnerability and thus to ensure the sustainable functioning of the Community Radio Initiatives:

(1) **A strong community ownership** should be at the core: when the community feels that this is their initiative to which it provides producers and stories, where it assists in overcoming financial problems, and where it prevents theft by all being alert and protective, only then would a station have a chance of survival. Creating this community ownership feeling takes time. Thus arises the critical component of a workable (Stakeholder Engagement Plan) for a one to two year mobilisation and capacitation phase prior to lobby and advocacy initiatives that will result in registration, which would absorb all interest once in place.

(2) Furthermore **effective training and capacitation** would need to be organised, facilitating that the community, can run the station effectively in terms of management and community relations, programming, administration and technical maintenance.

(3) A **technical sustainability system** is needed, including effective and realistic responses to the different levels of support needed.

Beyond these core factors addressed in detail below, the importance of (4) **financial viability** beyond the period during which the ZACRAS and other donor projects, there is need to be able to provide a security net for the initiatives, including limiting costs to the absolute necessary minimum, on the one hand, and assisting to devise a multi-faceted system of sources of income – and capacity within the community to maintain this – on the other.

1. **Creating community ownership**

In many other parts of the world, community radio initiatives grow out of vocal civic movements, requiring a radio station to voice their concerns and ensure fulfilment of their objectives. As described above, such civic movements exist in Zimbabwe where the need for communication media is great.

Based on the assessments above, and the initial realisation that the inception method of the initiatives which are off air need important improvements, a similar obtaining environment obtained in Mozambique:

UNESCO decided to start with pilot Initiatives in three locations which the project had identified in different parts of the country, all providing the minimum conditions of some basic infrastructures in place (like electricity and accessibility by air or road), yet in acute need of a communication medium. This was later expanded to include altogether eight communities, six of which are situated rather far outside the provincial capitals. Based on experiences from many countries, and with the aim of a broad-based community involvement in the initial establishment of the radio Initiatives, we designed a social mobilisation process, carefully identifying in each community the many sub-communities within, ensuring information to, dialogue with and mobilisation of all of these. The initial rounds of such mobilisation culminated in a large community meeting that elected an installation committee under procedures designed to ensure representativity, credibility and the availability of sufficient capacity to drive the installation process. The national and otherwise very open and democratic media legislation does not yet recognise “community media” as such. When neither state nor commercial, a community needs to form an association which can be granted a license/sending permission and a frequency. The first challenge for the installation committee was thus to prepare a set of statutes through community meetings, that have to achieve a certain level of consensus on what the objectives and modalities of this new organism are to be.

Once the papers of the association, including statutes, identification of the founding members, etc, have been approved by the provincial governor (representing the state in each of the ten national provinces), the general founding assembly elects its social bodies, including the presidency of the association, the management committee, and the supervisory inspection committee, overseeing that the management committee conscientiously works along the lines agreed in the general assembly.

Once the association is founded, the management committee takes over the functions of the installation committee, and in most cases we have seen an important similarity in the composition of the two bodies: when community members have served well and continued to be credible and worthy of the community’s respect and trust after serving for the initial period on the installation committee, they are also elected to continue the important organising and mobilisation work in the communities. When the association is functional, it can have a radiation study carried out, upon which it can apply for a sending permission, including a license and a frequency. Now the legal basis for the community ownership is in place. In order, however, to ensure not only the formal, but the real, felt and functional community ownership, this is only the very beginning.

To maintain and to ensure a continued broad-based community representation in the management committees, we have recommended strongly that the community radio associations have 12-14 members like the installation committees. This also means that once the organisation process is so far that it is time to recruit the UNESCO paid staff members of the radio station, each of these can have a background support group from the management committee of three to UNESCO of its members.

Lessons Learnt:

In assessing the UNESCO project, it is indispensable to acknowledge that these background groups are initially pivotal in ensuring a good entry into the community work by the staff members, who are recruited to ensure the effective implementation of the community's dreams and aspirations – through broadcasting. As such they are the employees of the community, and need to know this very clearly on the one hand. On the other it is in many of the places, where community radios are being established, very difficult to identify persons with knowledge and experience in the area of management, administration, mobilisation and technical support as is the case with most of the community radio initiatives in Zimbabwe. Mentoring, training, support and thorough and continued coaching of the staff members by the management committee background groups is usually needed.

This is a good beginning for ensuring the real-life community ownership. With the obtaining situation in most community radio initiatives in Zimbabwe, we are, however, still talking only about a very limited group of people from the community involved in the management work! Yet the crisis of democratisation also poses challenges related to a management committee that has the technical skills to stir viable operations. While this may seem as a contradiction it is nonetheless possible to strike a balance between democratising (community ownership) and retaining the requisite skills by creating specific portfolios that require technical skills within the management committees. In order to accommodate this need, ZACRAS and its members will need to create a "Process Coach Scheme": a person is employed to work in the community every second weekend. This coach is responsible for the mobilisation process within the community, for assisting and facilitating the organising work of first the installation committee and afterwards the management committee, and finally for organising training processes for the many volunteer community members in order to prepare them to function

effectively within and around the community radio. As most volunteers are interested in becoming community radio programmers, the coaches have to stress the importance of some support functions that also need community assistance, such as security guarding, cleaning and keeping the membership files in order, and not least the important functions of a technician.

The Process Coach Scheme will prove to be extremely adequate and effective, creating not only a basic nucleus of between 20 and 70 knowledgeable, trained, committed and highly motivated community members around the station, but also having ensured that much wider parts of the many communities within the community are informed about the processes and plans, thus ensuring their feeling of belonging to the process.

Besides from these two primary and parallel processes – creation of the association and the process coach scheme - both pivotal in creating community ownership feeling, a number of other, very different measures have to be carried out, in order to facilitate the community ownership: Effective enrolment, registration and documentation of memberships; a well thought out and strategic location of the future station; encouragement that the radio initiatives create a comfortable, community meeting area just outside of the station: a shady place that however identifies with the community's daily activities such places for example for Patsaka Community Radio Initiative may include a market place where the community sells '*matemba*¹' or dried fish; just to mention one of the many possible, adequate local means and ideas to give the radio a true community profile.

2. Creating adequate training solutions

Starting a community radio initiative can seem relatively simple, with the funds available and one or a few dynamic core persons involved. In most areas the researcher was met with clear community statements demonstrating the need for a radio station, explaining the local problems are, and giving concrete examples of how a radio could help the community overcome some of these. Priscilla from Radio Kwelaz² explains:

¹ Matemba is a local term given to Kapenta Fish in Zimbabwe. Patsaka Trust also has a community economic empowerment programme in which the trust engages the community to sell fish for both local and export markets.

² Radio Kwelaz is a community broadcasting initiative located in Kwekwe, Midlands Province and was established in 2004

We have been encouraged to find that even without much schooling and very few opportunities for receiving information, let alone much knowledge of what “a community radio” is, people know well what their needs are, and have clear ideas about how to get there.

So even in these difficult contexts, the initial dynamism to get something going can be found. Ensuring a sustainable continuity, by contrast, is like in most other contexts in the world, extremely difficult.

In order to create their own radio station, communities have to start from scratch in practically all areas that form crucial parts of the capacity to run a sustainable and effective community radio initiative: community radio management, organisational development, staff and volunteer management, administration and financial management including donor relations and community fundraising, programming and programme format production including audience research and continued audience relations, not to mention technical operation and (preventive) management skills. In all communities there are people who possess some of these skills, at times due to training and education, yet in most cases due to amply proven real life experience in making life work – too often under extremely adverse conditions. The challenge is to identify these people, ensure that they become involved in some way in the organisation in or around the radio, and to create a number of adequate ways to further strengthen this capacity and the many others that are needed. Based on the study’s needs assessment, ZACRAS and its members may design a five-tier capacitation strategy including the following components:

- (i) A series of intensive 8-10 day training courses,
- (ii) A community training programme through process coaches,
- (iii) Exposure to related realities, including study trips to other community, commercial and public radio Initiatives ,
- (iv) Management Seminars and Workshops, and finally
- (v) Establishment of a ‘Training Station’, which can receive teams of up-starting radio initiatives and help these get going at a basic, yet sound basis and pace.

2.1 Intensive Community Radio Training Courses

With the aim to facilitate the concrete and high quality transfer of concrete skills, ZACRAS may organise a series of five intensive 8-10 day training courses in the following areas:

- ❖ “How to start and manage a community radio station”;
- ❖ “Community Radio Programming”;
- ❖ “Audience Research”;
- ❖ “Preventive Maintenance, level I and II”.

Each course has to be organised several times in different parts of the country, in order to allow 2 – 4 representatives of each of the partner communities to participate in each of these courses without exceeding a total of 16-18 participants per course in order to ensure maximal training impact. Upon return the participants will organise – often in collaboration with the coach - seminars for the relevant groups of community volunteers, thus sharing the skills they would have acquired and discussing how to make best use of these locally. For the five course areas ZACRAS and its members should develop tailor-made training materials in local languages, which participants can take back home and use as a basis for further community capacitation. These materials include formats for budgeting, job descriptions and contract formats for different paid and/or volunteer staff contracts, basic formats for development of internal policy papers including the rules and regulations for the many different areas of work of the initiatives, overviews of different programme types as well as methods for development of overall programming formats and plans, audience research methodologies and background materials to be locally adapted, technical manuals, guides on establishment of preventive management routines, and much more. The strength of these courses is the special, intensive training and capacity-building dynamic of bringing people together for a longer period – day and night – to learn, discuss and live with new concepts, insights and skills. The effect of this type of training covers all three of the well-known “**KAP**” set of factors, providing **Knowledge**, working during the many days and through the intense nature on the participants’ **Attitudes**, and imparting some new skills through – initial - **Practice**. All of these factors are crucial for ZACRAS members

and partners to obtain a broad-based insight into the many factors that bring life to the community's radio dreams.

On top of this, the courses and the way they are organised yield a number of important secondary effects: While all communities are different and include individuals with different basic capacities, bringing people together from different parts of the country, who are all in the same basic situation results in strong lateral links and a feeling of partnership between the participating communities. Numerous ZACRAS platforms have seen important examples of these being brought to effective mutual use. Another – to many individuals overwhelmingly – important factor is, that these platforms in the past brought participants around in their country. Some of the rural community radio programmers working with ZACRAS, had previously never been very far outside of their birthplace, and thus often visited the capital Harare and the other training locations for the very first time. As the programming of the community radios is primarily based on volunteer staff, a certain circulation/fluctuation in this corps must be expected.³

Training can therefore not be done once and for all, but rather has to be seen as a process that continuously trains new entrants, and further develops the skills of those already involved.

UNESCO in Mozambique – is planning to repeat all of the courses already held, and to develop new types of intensive training courses and seminars, including topical seminars capacitating the community programmers to cover effectively core development issues such as HIV/AIDS, Health in general, Agriculture, Environment, Gender, Youth – with an emphasis on the girl child, etc.

However, downsides of these courses are not only their comparatively high costs (travel, board, high level trainers, course and material development and printing) and the necessity of a full-time secretariat in charge of the organisation.

³ Kudzai from Radio Mutare professes that it is often difficult to retain qualified volunteers as they possess the skills required in commercial broadcasting where they are paid better salaries and may not have the time to partake in community development initiatives

Lesson:

A more fundamental weakness is that the UNESCO courses in Mozambique are that they can only provide training for two or at best three or UNESCO representatives from each community. While often these representatives conscientiously share what they have experienced and learnt with the community upon return, this does not always happen, at times for a lack of will, more often due to lack of capacity to do so effectively. The task for Community Radio Initiatives and ZACRAS is to develop a workable even-skills distribution strategy.

Without underestimating the strength and importance of the training courses, these alone are far from sufficient to capacitate communities to be in charge of their own radio initiative. The study thus had to identify an effective way of training the communities in a much broader way and come up with a concept, which proves to live up very effectively to ZACRAS platform expectations: The Process Coach Scheme.

2.2 Community Training Through the Process Coach Scheme

After getting the idea of having regular training activities taking place in the community for all its members interested in becoming involved in the work with the radio, the question is: how? What kind of people, professionals, would be effective as community facilitators, mobilisers and trainers? As these “coaches” will be required to prepare the basis for strong and empowering community action through the development of a community medium, the study identifies as the core and overriding quality needed, a personal one: the coach would need to be used to and to have a proven capacity to work effectively with diverse communities, in an atmosphere of respect and mutuality. The challenge to the coach will be to empower people, who had no or very little experience with seeing themselves as dynamic forces in their community’s democratic development, who have strongly varying – and often only very basic - educational and experience backgrounds. And to capacitate these future community movers through basic awareness-raising, through concrete individual and collective capacity building and through creation of comprehensive organisational structures, may therefore decide to look for either radio journalists, local school teachers or community

organisers/workers with this profile, who live as near as possible to the communities in question as is the case with CORAH⁴ or Radio Kwelaz.

In Rwanda under a similar UNESCO project the first group of three coaches were all recruited from the public broadcasting station, two of these, however, being women who formed part of a special national programme with a focus on rural women. These three journalists – with different levels of professional background, education and experience themselves – knew about radio, but little or nothing about what **community** radio could be. We therefore needed to start the process with the capacitation of the future coaches. The first “Training-of-Coaches” (TOC) was organised as a two week process, where the professional staff of UNESCO Media Development Project visited with the three coaches two distinctively different community radio initiatives in two different parts of the country, demonstrating one very simple, bamboo-hut like station with rudimentary equipment, broadcasting some 8 hours a day through programmes, primarily directly on-air, to a vastly rural community. The other was a station in a middle sized town, with more equipment, a higher level of internal organisation, more daily programming hours and more pre-produced programmes.

During the TOC study trip, long internal discussion sessions on how to turn national and international community radio experience effectively into workable formats in the South African reality, interchanged with meetings with the local station managers, volunteers, community members, providing the project and UNESCO coaches with the opportunity to listen and learn. On this basis each of UNESCO coaches started to work approximately 30 hours per month in “their” communities, besides continuing their primary work with the public broadcaster. One of these coaches lived in the community in question, and worked with the installation committee every Wednesday evening and with the growing group of volunteers every Saturday morning. Another one of the coaches lived some 4 hours away by boat and bus, and found with her community the best rhythm to be working together every Saturday. The third coach, needing to travel some 8-10 hours by train each way, agreed with her community to work every second weekend, from her arrival Friday afternoon and until Sunday evening.

Lessons: Monitoring and Evaluating Progress

In order for the project to closely follow developments and progress made, it will be prudent to install a monitoring system including weekly telephone conferences on a set time with each of the coaches, and the receipt of a monthly written report. This report will at least serve at four purposes:

- ❖ It forces the coach to reflect on developments month by month, to present and assess the activities carried out, to describe and justify the plans for the coming

⁴ CORAH is a community radio initiative operating in Harare and is managed by people with diverse skills ranging from educationists to journalists

month and to discuss the main problems and challenges, including areas where assistance is needed.

- ❖ Secondly it's a tool to monitor progress, and to ensure that the processes in each are on course
- ❖ Thirdly the report is proof that the coach is working
- ❖ Finally, the report serves the purpose of documenting this important and – to the community's knowledge – innovative community mobilisation and training work-process, carried out in preparation of community ownership of a radio initiative.

Besides these weekly and monthly monitoring exercises, carry out bi-annual evaluation seminars. These seminars may last between two and four days, and covering a combination of exchange of experience, assessment of successes and failures during the past months, planning for the coming six months and further refinement of work methods in each of the participating communities.

Since 60% of the community radio initiatives are up and running though varying in terms of being operational, the study has designed a model – discussed in more detail below – where large groups of volunteers support only paid staff members who run the station: the Co-ordinator, the Administrator, the Technician, and finally, the Mobilisers. It is important plan that this latter person will work closely together and finally take over the functions of the coach. Together with the Co-ordinator, the Mobilisers are responsible to organise and manage the volunteer programmers, continually mobilise the communities within the community to provide programmers, and in general to support the station. Further tasks will comprise an effective system of training and capacitation activities, as well as continued and effective ways of absorbing new volunteers in the life and work of the station upon registration. With this scheme in place, the crucial question is how to turn the themes of the many sessions into a real life context. Most of the community radio programmers have never seen a community radio studio with the exception of a few such as Radio Dialogue⁵, and have only a faint idea of what it could look like. It is therefore important to couple the formal courses and the

⁵ Radio Dialogue is a Matabeleland based Community Initiative with a mobile studio facility

work of the coaches, with some exposure to 'radio station realities' – as diverse and different as possible. These can be done by engaging in external exchanges with developing countries such as Mozambique, South Africa and Rwanda

2.3 Exposure to Related Realities, including Study Trips

While intense trainings provide in-depth understanding of a specific subject, and the weekly coach-sessions provide a broad-based insight into community radio programming and work methods, the need for the community member to understand how this all can be turned into one working organism is a key question to answer.

Therefore, as an important part of the training and capacitation strategy encourage – and often actively plan and organise – visits to as many other related realities as possible, in order for the community radio back-bone, the volunteers and 'owners', to find themselves in a position, where they can choose between different – not just theoretic, but real life - models, seen, experienced and discussed with colleagues.

Some study visits can thus be paid to the public broadcaster,

Case:

Radio Mozambique – usually one of its eight provincial delegations, that belong closely to the public broadcaster, but are in a process of some, gradual decentralisation in specific areas. Other visits led to more community oriented radios, of which presently no less than four different types exist: community radios initiated by the state communication institute (7 so-called community Initiatives and 14 rural radio and TV Initiatives), the catholic community oriented Initiatives (5 in the country), the independent, community-association based radios, and one single municipal community radio station.

Discussion Point:

Another interesting model to visit and to measure dreams and plans against are the other religious broadcasting houses that have developed a mix between commercial broadcasting and missionary messages. In order to learn yet more on basic organisational development and functional structures for sustainability, encourage some of the community groups - besides visiting other radio initiatives - to liaise closely with other civic organisations. This also opens their eyes to the fact that within their

own communities, or nearby, they may find organisations that – while quite different from radio development groups - possess much of the capacity for sustainability that communities will need in their further development processes.

2.4 Management Seminars and Workshops

As emanates from the description above, the capacity building strategy builds on a continuous assessment of the ever changing needs for specific capacity-building activities that become visible through specifically commissioned consultancies, the monthly, analytically geared reports from process coaches, and not least almost daily contact with the community management committees and the staff of the initiatives .

On the basis if this continuous needs assessment, a number of special, tailor-made and need-driven management seminars and workshops should be developed. Examples comprise revamping and strengthening of financial systems, devising an effective and efficient organisation structure and work flow, co-ordination between the many editorial groups of volunteer programmers, among others.

3 Creating technically sound and sustainable responses

While the relevant and effective community content is the core of any Community Radio all over the world, nothing will get on air without the technical part of the magic being in place.

In a country like Mozambique, the importance of this cannot be exaggerated. Many of the community radios we looked at in UNESCO initial assessment phase were off the air because of a combination of factors that surfaced due to insufficient technical planning. Such factors included inadequate technical overall configurations of the stations that were not geared to the specific local conditions but were provided as pre-prepared packages from different donors; inadequately prepared local staff without any particular (preventive) maintenance skills or routines; insufficient funds to cater for upcoming technical problems; and insufficient community mobilisation that would ensure community backing in times of trouble.

Discussion:

In a country like Mozambique, the importance of this cannot be exaggerated. Many of the community radios were at the initial assessment phase i.e. off the air because of a combination of factors that surfaced due to insufficient technical planning. Such factors included inadequate technical overall configurations of the initiatives that were not geared to the specific local conditions but were provided as pre-prepared packages from different donors; inadequately prepared local staff without any particular (preventive) maintenance skills or routines; insufficient funds to cater for upcoming technical problems; and insufficient community mobilisation that would ensure community backing in times of trouble.

In an attempt to learn from the sad and painful experiences in Mozambique and neighbouring countries, the study opts for a vast set of different conditions that had to be in place, in order to avoid repeating the worst of the existing past experiences.

3.1 Technical policies and magic configurations

With respect to the configuration of the studios it is necessary to relate carefully to today's discussions of using semi-professionals or not quite as robust equipment (maybe) of obscure origin, thinking of a throw-away-and-buy-new philosophy, against a more traditional quality-oriented attitude. Whereas the economic aspects of the technically weaker options might seem advantageous to a country in a financial situation like Zimbabwe, the consequences are totally unappealing: it is not possible in the local market to buy the (cheaper) substitutes, nor is it easy to import them into the country, where formalities, procedures and bureaucracy is prohibitive. These factors are prone to result in late arrival of equipment, less than interesting end-prices and increased vulnerability to equipment failure and non-replacement.

In the Zimbabwean situation the configurations rather need to look for sturdiness, standard brands with spare-parts easily accessible, ease of preventive maintenance and compatibility with other brands, simplicity. As there may be limited qualified repair technicians, it is furthermore necessary to look for suppliers who are more than sales-people. They must not only be ready to provide an adequate after sale service, but also to provide the necessary initial training of the staff members responsible for the operation and of all station members in (preventive) maintenance.

Finally, none of the above will have the needed impact, without the initiative's management committee and executive body having put into place precise policies, regulations, and resulting basic rules in the many different areas of work, including the technical area, such as: who has access to what equipment upon what level of training and insight. Who is responsible for the weekly, the monthly, the semi-annual, the annual preventive maintenance routines. And: when break-downs occur, who carries out which diagnostic, methodical routines, and with which sequence of reactions and connections?

3.2 Capacitation for a sound technical sustainability

To prepare the community programmers and technicians to this reality it may be possible to devise the following sequence of training and capacitation actions in the technical area: First of all a formal training course (see above, 2.1) should be organised in Preventive Maintenance, that also focuses on the identification of needed community radio initiative policies, which has to be detailed in regulations, that in turn can be specified into basic rules to be posted in the station. This course further comprises an introduction to the most basic technical equipment operation rules and methods, focusing on the prevention of problems as well as front-line maintenance, including basic diagnostic routines. Due to its important management component, both the core technician and the co-ordinator of the station will be among the 3-5 persons from each station that participates in the training courses.

The second part of the technical capacitation process is to send the main technician from each of the initiatives to a functional similar initiative say in Africa for example Cape Town would be ideal. There, these technicians will be guided through an intensive process of "learning-by-doing" through which they will build up for their own future studios. In this way – besides from feeling very much as the 'owner' of and responsible for the equipment - they come to know the role and importance of practically every screw, and learn how to take good care of the specific equipment as well as basic (preventive) maintenance procedures.

The third procedure will be to develop a manual that is translated into local languages on how to set up a studio with practical exercises being carried out so that every staff member is aware of basic maintenance procedures

The fourth and final part of the technical package within the first phase of the skills trainings, is a continued, and more in-depth, level II Preventive Maintenance training course, that can only be relevant when initiatives have been licensed and are now operational on air and equipped with the studios. By then, the users and technicians will have identified the first problems, which will allow them to benefit maximally from the training provided.

With the carefully composed equipment packages, configured to match the individual situations, climates and conditions maximally, and this technical capacitation process in place, it is expected and hoped that the initiatives will be able to achieve both operational and technical sound technical sustainability.

Chapter 5

Conclusion and Recommendations:

This section covers a synthesized version of the research findings identifying gaps and developing recommendations to achieve the operationalisation of yet-to-function and semi-functional community radio initiatives. The section also speaks to sustainable broadcasting as well as advocacy and lobby strides that can be taken to ensure efficiency in the registration and licensing of community radio initiatives.

In Zimbabwe and across the world, community media are growing and are becoming more accepted as part of the media scene. Urban and rural communities in developed and developing countries are organizing themselves around community media – asserting its value; going to extraordinary lengths to ensure their organizations survive. Many people are turning to community radio, the most prevalent community medium, because its affordability and reach make it so attractive to communities and development agencies. New forms of community media are emerging as digital technologies and convergence present new opportunities and platforms for communities and individuals. The role of community media in reaching communities that are hard to reach, in empowering historically oppressed people, in development, in strengthening local cultures and democracy is increasingly recognized.

It is imperative that community development agencies and practitioners (ZACRAS and its member organisations) engage in introspection and attempt to address the following aspects as a standard procedure either for establishing or strengthening already existing Community Radio Initiatives in attaining sustainable community media broadcasting:

NB: These recommendations are best treated as a cycle of sustainability and require institutions to engage in a process-output exercise in order to retain their net worth.

- ❖ Identification of different aspects of sustainability relating to programmes, human resources, financials, management and technology
- ❖ Mapping and evaluating the growth of the respective CRS on a case by case basis
- ❖ Programmatic sustainability (covering participatory formats, workshops and training, the importance of research and feedback mechanisms, and the reach and an overall Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy for each initiative)
- ❖ Personnel sustainability (developing personnel policy, conflict resolution mechanisms, discussions about organizational structures, team building exercises and transparent functioning)
- ❖ Financial sustainability (planning and identifying income and expenditure; different approaches to revenue generation such as community funding, government funding, grants, fellowships and resources from funding agencies etc.; the potential of advertising; financial management systems and financial audits for transparency)
- ❖ Social sustainability (interaction and engagement with the community, community representation modes through CR, accessibility to the CRS and technology made available to community members for involvement in CR at the programmatic and managerial level, and models for community participation)
- ❖ Acquisition and Maintenance of Technology (basic maintenance of studio and equipment, stock keeping, use of reliable software, benefits of free and open source software, use of wiki tools, etc.)
- ❖ Options for registering a CRS (viable legal community structures, social audit mechanisms, accountability to the government). Community Radio Initiatives have an option of registering as Trusts though this limits their operational scope as they cannot broadcast live on air

The paper has touched on all of the internal and external factors believed to be needed to build community media sustainability, and has tried to deepen understandings of the often difficult and fraught – but very necessary – donor-community media relationship. There is no perfect community media model – and even if there was, it would change: community media are by definition dynamic and must change as community needs and interests change. Working towards sustainability is an important responsibility, to be shared by all stakeholders. But if too strong a focus on sustainability means compromising the extraordinary role that community media can play in healing communities torn apart by conflict, in mobilizing communities to engage in local development, in stimulating local economies, in giving voice to local cultures and traditions, in disseminating basic information and education... it raises the question – is it worth it?

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