



# An Inquiry into the Structure and Feasibility of Community Radio Stations

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## Executive Summary

This report presents an overview of the political economy surrounding community radio broadcasting in Zimbabwe. The study employed a mixed-methods approach to investigate the perspectives of various stakeholders, including community members, radio station managers, policymakers, policy implementers, and civil society. The research focused on funding, operations, control, and content production within community radio broadcasting. The report emphasizes the potential of community radio to facilitate citizen participation in the democratic process. However, it notes that the government has been reluctant to grant licenses for community radio stations, resulting in the emergence of alternative initiatives throughout Zimbabwe. These initiatives utilize new media platforms such as the internet and commuter omnibus casting to provide citizens with an expanded platform for expression. The report highlights that community radio stations in Zimbabwe operate within an environment dominated by the State and that media reform is yet to be fully realised. Only ZBC, a publicly-owned entity, is permitted to obtain listener licenses for its radio stations. Additionally, there is a dearth of contemporary studies examining how revenue generation impacts the operations of community media and its role in fostering democratic space for communities. To ensure the survival and growth of these radio stations, the report recommends creating an enabling environment that promotes citizen participation and democracy. It also calls for genuine media reform in Zimbabwe to establish a fair playing field for all media players. In conclusion, while community radio broadcasting has the potential to promote pluralism, diversity, participation, and citizen engagement in Zimbabwe, further efforts are necessary to guarantee its success.



## Introduction

In February 2020, Zimbabwe's media sector experienced a significant development when the Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe (BAZ) made a call inviting those wishing to enter the community broadcasting sector to apply for campus and community radio licenses. In the same year, BAZ issued licenses to three community radio stations. The following year, 11 more community radio stations were granted operating licenses. This move was viewed as a milestone towards promoting pluralism, diversity, participation, and citizen engagement. The history of broadcasting in Zimbabwe has been characterised by State control and lack of pluralism and diversity. Until 2012, advocacy efforts by civic society and media support organisations for the government to implement provisions of the Broadcasting Services Act of 2001 allowing for a tier system were not fruitful. The three tier system provides for public, commercial and community broadcasting.

The licensing of two national commercial broadcasters in 2012 to institutions linked to the government and the ruling party did little to increase prospects of a broadcasting space, which is filled with diversity and plurality. Thus the licensing of community radio stations is located in the perils and prospects of widening democratic space in Zimbabwe. Who is behind the ownership, funding and control of the community radio stations? Could the new stations reflect the views of the community? What are the participation dynamics of the ordinary residents in the communities when it comes to community radio broadcasting? What are the ideals and realities of community broadcasting in relation to content production, financial sustainability and funding issues? Concerns over funding, participation, training, and governance issues have since emerged. To ensure the survival and growth of these radio stations, an enabling environment should be created to foster citizen participation and promote democracy.

This report reviews the political economy of community radio broadcasting in Zimbabwe, using a mixed-methods approach to explore the views of community members, radio station managers, policymakers, policy implementers, and civil society regarding funding, operations, control, and content production. The report aims to promote pluralism, diversity, participation, and citizen engagement of communities in the activities and operations of the community broadcasting platforms.

## Community broadcasting: Principles and processes

Community radio broadcasting gives a voice to marginalised communities and is owned and controlled by a community, either geographically or by interest. Community participation and ownership are key tenets of community broadcasting. Community radio stations should be managed by community members for their communities and serve their interests. Community radios are underpinned by three core values: community ownership and management, non-profit status, and community participation. The involvement of ordinary people in production, decision-making, management, and planning is important. Community broadcasters should be non-profit entities and exist to contribute to the socio-cultural and economic development of the community. They should operate for social benefit and empower marginalised communities. Community radio stations should be independent of government, advertisers, donors, and other vested interests. Radio programming should reflect the interests and needs of the community, with emphasis on community ownership, participation, and autonomy.

## Historical background of broadcasting in Zimbabwe

Radio is the most widely accessible medium in the world, and in Africa, it was established as a political tool to control the masses and administer territories during colonial times. The challenges and opportunities presented to audiences by community media is of increasing concern for media practitioners, regulators and academics. Community owned media is a relatively new concept when it comes to broadcasting. From the development of radio broadcasting, public ownership and later commercial practice were the two forerunners in broadcasting, Banard (2001), Javuru (2011). However, in the later years of the 20th century, the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) drove the initiative towards community broadcasting. Atugala (2006) asserts that the three-tier broadcasting model for Africa was implemented by the African Charter on Broadcasting in 2001. In Africa the placement of community broadcasting is problematic because of the politicised nature of broadcasting, stemming from the colonial era, Moyo (2004). There is mistrust about community broadcasting from other sections of society. In Kenya, community radios



have consistently struggled to get established, mainly because the “known community radio stations in Kenya are mostly owned by development-oriented and civic organisations” (Javuru (2011:4). This places community owned radio stations under strain and may lack support. Empirical evidence in South Africa suggests that community radio can be a tool to develop communities as demonstrated by (Osunkule 2008) in Limpopo Province.

In other parts of the world, community radio is also known as alternative radio (Mhagama 2015). It has developed to fight segregation as in the case of apartheid South Africa. Alternative media are “those media that provide a different point of view from that usually expressed that cater to communities not well served by the mass media, or that expressly advocate social change” (Watz 2005: 2). In Africa community radio is an outcome of the wave of democratisation, which took place in the 1990s on the back of Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes (ESAPs) and the neoliberal media movements. Lingela (2008) adds that the wave of democratisation resulted in the significant emergence of media houses in a deregulated media environment. The relaxation of authoritarian control of broadcasting in countries such as Nigeria, Malawi, South Africa and Zambia resulted in the introduction of the three tiers of public, commercial and community broadcasting.

In Zimbabwe, the Rhodesia Broadcasting Corporation (RBC) was owned by the colonial government and operated radio broadcasting services. Radio is particularly appealing in African communities due to its potential for participatory democracy and development, especially in rural areas where 70% of the population resides. The Broadcasting Act of 1957 permitted only government broadcasting until it was repealed in 2000 when it was replaced by the Broadcasting Services Act (BSA). The BSA was expected to usher in community and commercial radio broadcasting. Commercial broadcasting gained traction through licensing while community broadcasting failed to gain licensing status until 2020. However, community radio initiatives had long since emerged in the past across Zimbabwe using new media platforms such as the internet and kombi casting.

The government in Zimbabwe maintained a tight grip on broadcasting through a restrictive legal environment until the year 2000, which became a watershed moment in the country’s broadcasting landscape. Capital Radio, a private broadcaster, challenged the government’s monopoly over broadcasting and successfully contested the constitutionality of the Broadcasting Act (1957) in the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court declared the State’s monopoly of the airwaves as a violation of freedom of expression and hence, unconstitutional. Capital Radio began to broadcast from secret locations in Harare, but the government responded swiftly by drafting the Broadcasting Services Presidential Powers (Temporary Measures) Bill to deal with what it called the “invasion of the airwaves.” This Bill became the Broadcasting Services Act in 2001, and the government declared Capital Radio a ‘pirate’ station and shut it down.

However, these restrictive efforts by the Government did not stop a number of community radio initiatives to sprout over the years after the court challenge by Capitol Radio. Community radio initiatives such as Radio Dialogue, Community Radio Harare and later Ntepe-Manama in Gwanda, Nkabaywe in Gweru, Radio Kwelaz in Kwekwe and other initiatives were established and operated using alternative means of information dissemination. In 2001, Radio Dialogue FM in Bulawayo was formed by a Roman Catholic priest, Father Nigel Johnson together with two University of Zimbabwe former students, Qhubani Moyo and Jethro Mpofu. It is imperative to note that narratives around community broadcasting in Zimbabwe, at initiative level as it were, would be incomplete without the mention of Radio Dialogue.

As at May 2016, when Radio Dialogue eventually shutdown due to economic viability challenges, the initiative had shrugged off difficulties of the restrictive media environment by exploring creative and alternative information dissemination and access platforms to ensure that the citizens of Bulawayo and surrounding areas enjoyed unhindered access to localised and national information. The initiative maximised new technological advancements to reach out to citizens through alternative platforms such as roadshows, community dialogue meetings, radio programmes uploaded on CDs and car modulators. Social media also played an important role in enabling Radio Dialogue to reach a wider audience. Through Facebook and Twitter, Radio Dialogue managed to reach over 50,000 people a week. Social media did not only help in communication and dissemination but it also increased interaction on social service delivery issues.

Radio Dialogue became part of the four radio stations broadcasting under the ChannelZim platform launched in March 2013, which was accessible through Free-to-Air decoders. Having started with pre-recorded programmes, Radio Dialogue transformed the ChannelZim platform to one of its flagship programmes through live broadcasting. Live broadcasting facilitated engagement and feedback from listeners through the toll free system that enhanced the phone-in programme. Broadcasting was for 8 hours (5am-1pm), averaging 50 calls per day. Of the four radio stations

broadcasting through ChannelZim, Radio Dialogue commanded 12% of the listenership (IMS –2014 Evaluation Report) and this was an indication of an increase in listenership and engagement of the community since its establishment, even attracting listenership from districts as far as Mashonaland and Masvingo.

In theory, the Broadcasting Services Act (2001) promoted a three-tier system comprising public, commercial, and community broadcasting. However, in practice, the “status quo of monopoly prevailed.” A regulatory authority, the Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe (BAZ), was established with a mandate to license operators and oversee the broadcasting sector. (Chiumbu, 2009; Moyo, 2010, 2012; Ndelela, 2010). Since independence, the government had a monopoly over radio broadcasting until 2012, when the government licensed commercial radio stations. The law called the Broadcasting Services Act (BSA) of (2001) created a new three tier broadcasting system which has public, commercial and community broadcasting, Ndawana (2015). At the formation of the Government of National Unity after the signing of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) in 2009, the government prioritised media reform as one of the key pillars of the agenda. Community radio is a platform to combat hunger, poverty, lack of freedom of expression, association and allow communities to shape the development agenda, Moyo (2012).

The Zimbabwe Association of Community Radio Stations (ZACRAS) contends that the government has an obligation to license community radio stations, which have submitted applications for registration to BAZ (MISA 2017). They advance the viewpoint that community radio stations offer vast opportunities to communities in terms of democratic participation through the media and add to media diversity, which current public service and commercial broadcasters cannot offer. On the other hand, exists the government and its regulator, BAZ, who do not see the need or urgency in licensing community radio stations (Charamba 2017). Crucially then permanent secretary in the Ministry of Media Information and Broadcasting Service George Charamba, at the official opening of Hevoi FM in Masvingo on 214 July 2017, argued that community radios were not an essence or basic demand for every community. He argued that the local commercial radio stations were serving community interests. He said:

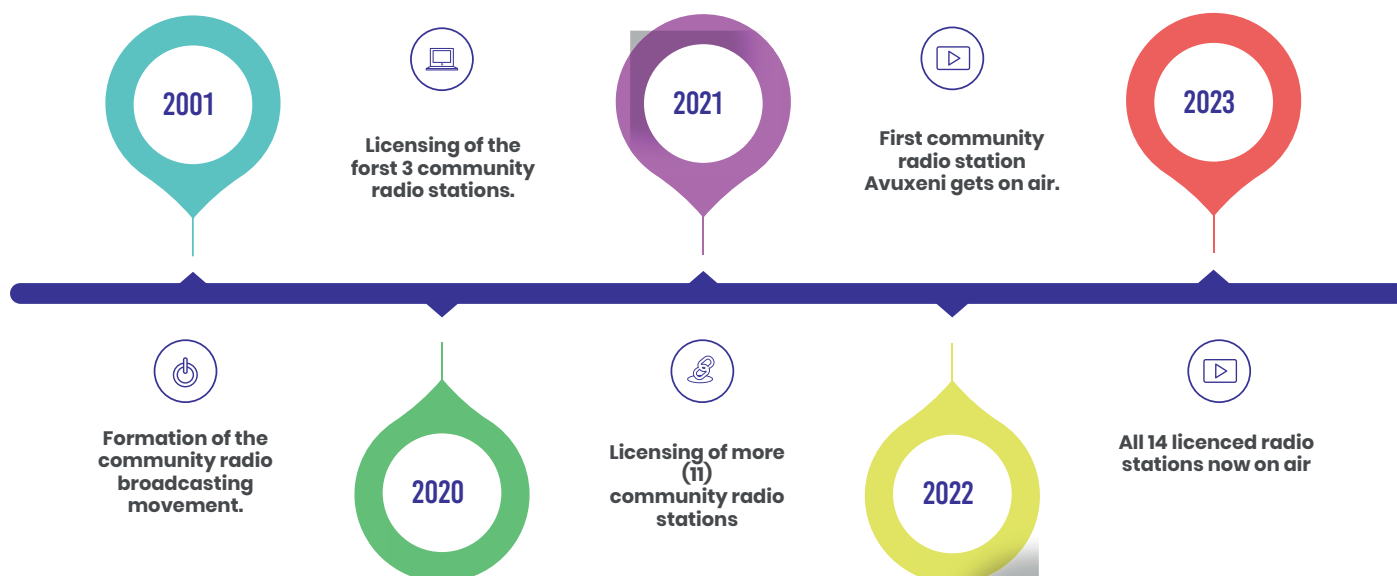
*“We must not be bigoted. We must be rational. Knowledge is how you tether it within a social milieu, let’s interrogate the terminology that we use and see whether it has sense in our own circumstances. The word ‘community radio’ presupposes that there is a radio that does not serve the community, so if there is a radio that does not serve the community who is it speaking to? Does a national radio station not serve a community?”. (Chronicle 14 July 2017)*

This debate on the relevance and function of community radio stations in Zimbabwean communities has become topical and more amplified,

Community radio broadcasting is envisioned to play important roles in citizen participation in the democratic process. Despite government’s refusal to register community radio stations, they have emerged in different forms and setups to offer citizens an increased platform for agency. However, the challenges and opportunities presented to audiences by community media remain under-documented.

The community radio stations in Zimbabwe are operating in an environment characterised by State domination, and there is a lack of genuine media reform. Only the public-owned broadcaster, ZBC, has the privilege of securing listener licenses for its radio stations. There are no contemporary studies examining the impact of revenue generation on operations of community media and its role in offering widened democratic space for communities.

According to the Broadcasting Services Act, community broadcasters are required to focus on community issues such as healthcare, environmental affairs, and local culture. They should also promote general education and a sense of common purpose within the community. Additionally, community broadcasters are not allowed to operate for profit or broadcast political matters or advertisements. The Broadcasting Fund was created to finance local broadcasting and is managed by BAZ.



### Timeline of community radio broadcasting in Zimbabwe

Timeline	Activity
2000	The Supreme Court of Zimbabwe repeals Section 25 of the Broadcasting Act, which firmed the ZBC as the sole player in the broadcasting sector.
2000	Section 14 of the Radio Communications Service Act preventing anyone from owning a transmitter.
2000	Capitol Radio, the first independent broadcaster starts to broadcast after winning a court challenge of ZBC being the sole player in the industry.
2000	Capitol radio is struck off-air and forced to shut down
2001	BSA act introduces for the first time, a legal recognition of community radio broadcasting in Zimbabwe.
2001	The first ever community radio initiative in Zimbabwe is established in Bulawayo.
2001 – 2002	Community radio advocacy and setting up of community radio initiatives is instutionalised within the MISA-Zimbabwe Advocacy Unit.
2003	Community Radio Harare (CORAH) is established in Harare.
2003	Community radio initiatives agree to form own independent association(ZACRAS)
2013	Constitution of Zimbabwe is passed, expanding the Bill of Rights including providing for community broadcasting in the spirit of enhancing access to information and freedom of expression.
2014	The government commissions information and Media Panel of Inquiry (IMPI). One of the key recommendations was to provide for the licensi4ng of community radio stations.
2019	BAZ appoints a substantive board after years without decision-making governance struc-ture.
2019	Discussions around frequency allotments emerges.
2020	Government invites those willing to apply for campus and community radio stations to ap-ply.
2020	A Statutory Instrument (SI) detailing separate campus and community radio regulations accompany is gazetted.
2020	Ntepe-Manama FM in Gwanda becomes the first ever community radio station to be award-ed a license in Zimbabwe
2022	Avuxeni FM in Chiredzi is officially launched by the Minister of Information, Publicity and Broadcasting Services and becomes the first community radio station to go on air.



## Methodology

The study aimed to investigate the political economy of community broadcasting in Zimbabwe in seven of the country's 10 provinces. To achieve this, a mixed-methods approach was employed, which included primary data collection through questionnaires for community members, one-on-one interviews with radio station managers, and one-on-one interviews with policymakers from the Ministry of Information, Publicity and Broadcasting Services, Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Media and Broadcasting, Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ), Zimbabwe Media Commission (ZMC), BA), and the national signal carrier, Transmedia.

In addition to primary data collection, desktop research was conducted to supplement the data gathered through the aforementioned methods. The data collected was analysed using content analysis and discourse analysis to identify themes and patterns.

The questionnaire for community members aimed to gather information on their perceptions of the political economy of community broadcasting, including issues related to ownership, funding, and political interference. The one-on-one interviews with radio station managers aimed to gather information on the economic models used by community radio stations, the challenges they face, and their perceptions of political interference in their operations.

The one-on-one interviews with policymakers aimed to gather information on the regulatory framework governing community broadcasting in Zimbabwe, their views on the political economy of community broadcasting, and their plans for its development.

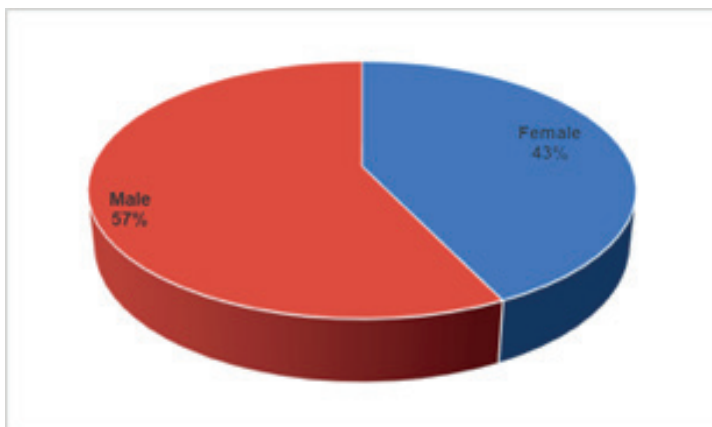
The research also carried out on-site validation exercises at six community radio stations to assess the credibility and validity of the data supplied as well as get more qualitative descriptions on quantitative data given.



# Research Findings

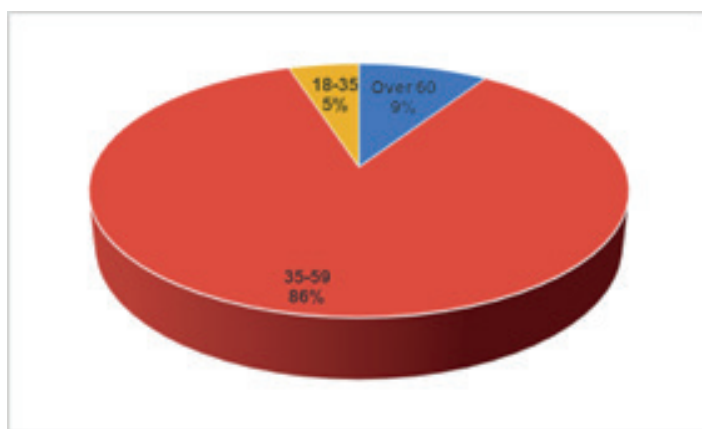
## Research Findings

### Demography of participants



The research gathered 610 responses from community members, 12 station managers, five policy makers and implementers. In the community members section, 355 or 57% were male, while 255 or 43% were women.

In terms of age, the majority of the respondents (529) were in the 35-59 range (86%); over 60 years (57) were 9% while 18-35 years (31) were 5%

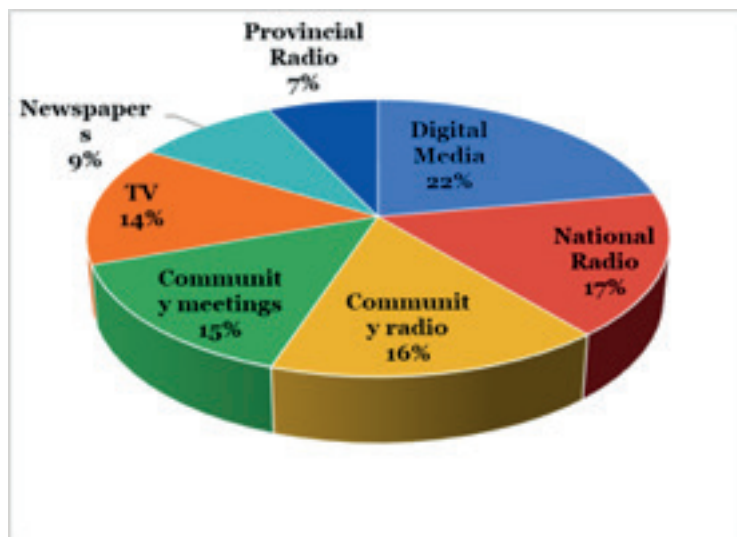


### Information needs preferences

Communities were asked about sources of news they use to access information. The responses are outlined below.

#### Sources of information for the 14 districts

The research found that there was a stronger affinity for the use of digital media as an information source (22%); followed by national radio (17%) and community radio (16%). The analysis is illustrated below



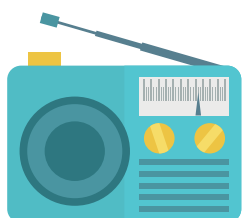




The reliance on digital media (social media, websites, blogs, e-publications, and podcasts) was 22%. The respondents highlighted that digital and social media platforms offered convenience and the immediacy when seeking information. This includes the widespread use of WhatsApp, Facebook and news websites across the communities.



17% of the respondents highlighted that they were reliant on national radio stations. This included commercial and public radio stations that provide them with news, through current affairs programs and news bulletins. They, however, highlighted that the station's programming did not directly address their community, but they were getting news of national interest.



The reliance on community radio was 16% from the respondents. The respondents highlighted that community platforms in their areas were able to provide them with localised news and events, which shaped their community understanding and agency.



Community meetings were selected by 15% of the respondents as an information source. The community meetings were addressed by traditional and community leaders as well as the church and political actors.



Television was rated at 14% by the respondents as an information source. Interestingly the respondents highlighted that local television stations were not accessible due to transmission limitations. Instead those with television sets were relying on satellite television, with the more popular being open View decoders. These are free to air and do not require subscription. Respondents highlighted that ZBC TV was not accessible and had challenges in transmission. Regarding the recently licensed television stations, the respondents indicated that they were yet to access them on free to air channels with ZTN being found on DSTV.



Newspapers were rated 9% in terms of information access. The respondents highlighted that due to geographical and economical limitations they did not consume national newspapers regularly. They usually relied on 'stale' newspapers, which are more recent, which are transported by buses, local opinion leaders and politicians from urban areas to the rural communities. However, community newspapers in some of the areas were accessible as long as the individuals were able to purchase them.

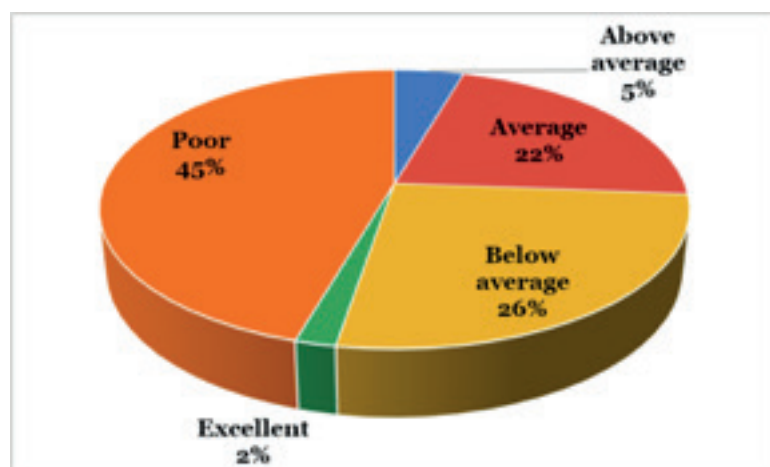


Provincial radio stations were rated the least at 7% for accessing information. The radio stations were cited as providing 'provincialised' and 'nationalised' information such as news. They did not directly speak to communities, though some of the programs were relatable. Some of the residents also highlighted that they were confused regarding what is a community and provincial station, as some for instance in Rusape indicated that they were of the assumption that Diamond FM in Mutare is a community radio station. The same was recorded in Hwange where some of the Lyeja FM respondents were of the view that both Lyeja and Breeze FM (provincial station in Victoria Falls) were both community radio stations.

## Effectiveness of the platforms in providing access to relevant community news

The responses indicated that the communities had a poor rating of the platform's ability to provide access to news on community scale. The majority 45% had a poor rating, below average 26%; average 22%, above average 5% and excellent 2%.

The poor rating of the selected media platforms in providing access to community specific news is a negative indictment



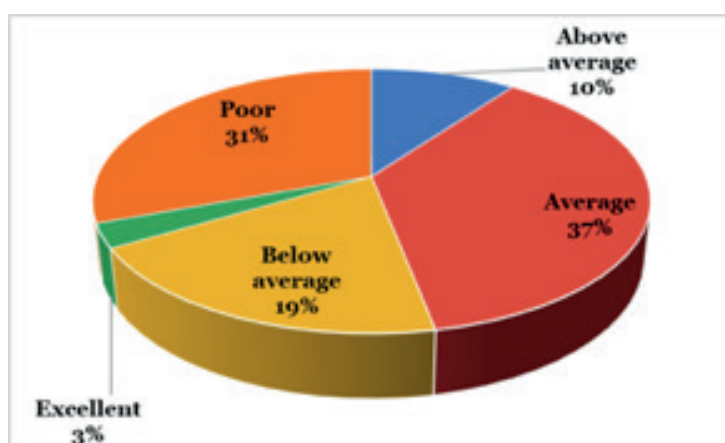
on the news media's ability to provide access to information in communities. This means that the media is not integrated in community information needs, rather taking news from national and generalised scale. Some community members highlighted that there was poor coverage of news, with news being Harare centric and information being centralised to urban areas.

Those who said it is excellent highlighted the work being undertaken by community newspapers in covering information needs. Above average gave credit to social media in particular local WhatsApp groups for tailoring information to meet the needs of the locals.

## Commercial Radio

Commercial radio stations are found in each of the provinces, which have a community radio station. The responses indicated that the commercial radio stations were not effective in meeting community information needs.

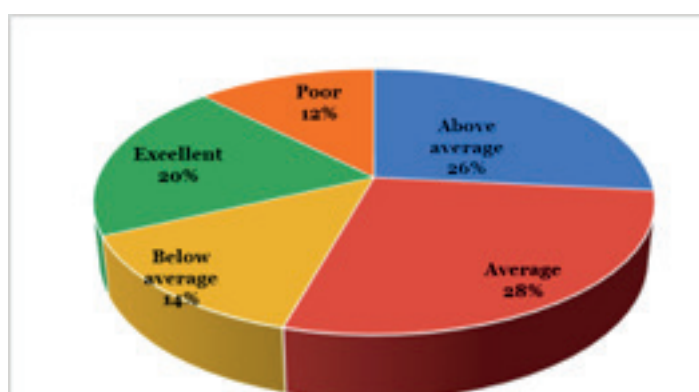
The responses from the questionnaire indicated that the majority 37% were of the view the commercial radio stations have local inward looking information provisions. The other 31% were of the view that the stations are poor. This was largely due to the fact that they were using some of the news outside the localities such as events taking place in urban areas. 19% were of the below average persuasion while 10% felt the stations were above average. 3% pointed out the stations were excellent.



## Community radio

The overall ratings of community radio stations indicate that they have a more inward looking information provision from the localities they serve.

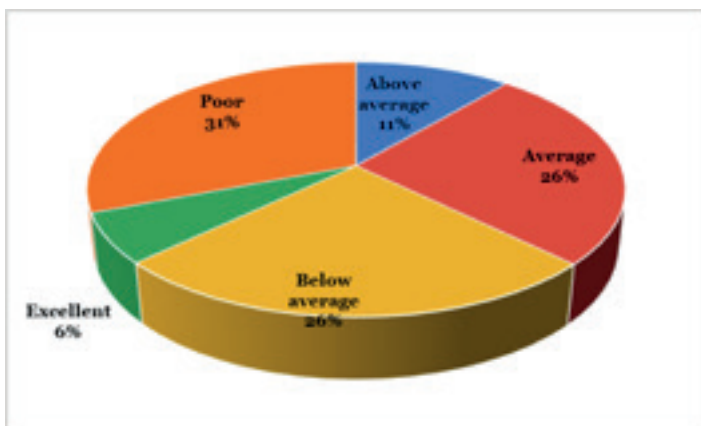
With remarkable difference from other media platforms, community radio stations were rated 28% average and 26% above average, this was through the communities' views that the stations were giving them a platform for the residents to express themselves. However, some said that they were below average at 14% in part due to the broadcast and production challenges they encountered. 20% of the residents rated community radio stations as relevant and excellent to their needs. This was because of community centric programming in local languages and sourcing of news from local events. 12% of the participants highlighted that there was poor coverage and effectiveness from the community radio stations



in information provision. They highlighted that the stations were broadcasting from a limited radius of 3km, 5km, 7 km and 15 km yet they were supposed to cover a 40km radius. Other responses were that the stations can interrupt the broadcasts without prior notice citing electricity and transmission challenges.

## Television

The response on the television section indicated that the majority of the participants indicated there were poor provisions of community related information at 31%.



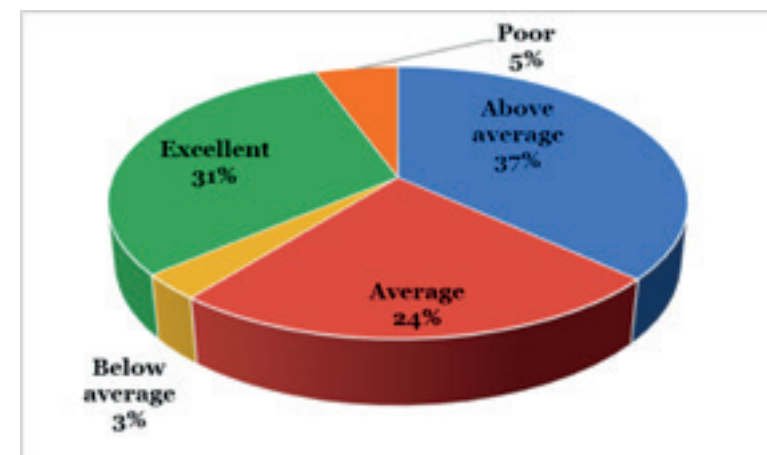
They cited the lack of transmission, urbanised television content and the generalisation of news to elite sources and events. Only the local areas were covered when there was a public figure visiting the area thus not meeting local expectations. There was a tie of 26% between below average and average with the respondents indicating that in some instances their local areas were covered in vernacular news or lunch time news bulletins. They were also given news coverage on weekly news programs such as Constituency Talk and Around Zimbabwe. 11% of the respondents felt that the television stations were handling issues above average and 6% indicated that they were excellent. They cited how the public service

broadcaster ZTV had segments for local issues and local programming such as music and cultural shows, indigenous language news and development issues. Some attributed the coverage of Zimbabwe's political issues by satellite television channels as a mark of excellence because the local television stations 'were not honest' in their editorials.

## Social media

Respondents indicated that social media was becoming an important part of their day to day communication as reflected below.

The majority of the respondents were positive that social media was important in meeting the information needs



of the communities. 37% were of the above average and 31% indicated social media was excellent in giving the community information it needs. The respondents highlighted that the information they need was found in local WhatsApp groups, which are populated by the residents of the community and local issues are shared as news generated citizen journalists. They are also able to hold local authorities to account regarding service delivery as the local leaders are able to undertake attend the residents' sessions. They are added into the group and provide relevant information and updates. The residents also highlighted that local WhatsApp groups and Facebook pages are a platform to combat crime, spread information about economic activities such

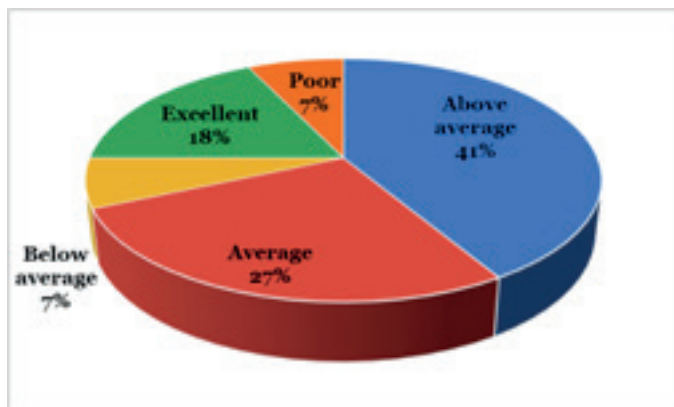
as agriculture, and mining. The participants (24%) felt that social media was average in meeting local information needs. They cited the incidences of information disorders and the lack of credibility of news, which presented risk despite the social platforms usefulness. Some of the participants (3%) highlighted that social media was not effective due to its high costs for accessing the social platforms, incidences of fake news, and high costs of social media devices.

## Digital media platforms (news websites)



The study also undertook an assessment of the information provisions by digital news websites and the results are illustrated below:

The majority of the citizens affirmed the relevance of news websites in providing information relevant to the community.



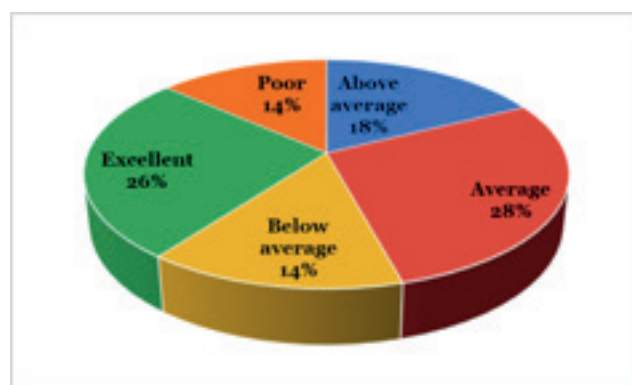
41% indicated that the news websites were above average while 18% added they were excellent. This was largely attributed to the relaxed gatekeeping by one news website, which allowed them to publish issues of concern to a community. The participants also indicated that the online news websites were excellent in news coverage as they gave a space for communities beyond geography. They addressed the concerns of the communities of interest such as people living with disabilities, women and youth and some even published in vernacular languages. 27% of the responses were that the platforms were average. The reasons beyond this included the lack of originality as some were plagiarising news articles while at the same time

providing news after considering news values such as proximity (of geography) and interest about the community or its interests. Below average (7%) and poor were rated at an identical 7%. The reasons were that the news website bordered on sensationalised content and some relied on aggregating news even beyond Zimbabwe, which detached them from local realities. The respondents also highlighted that the news websites were based in urban areas, which is important when they make news gathering decisions. Additionally, the residents also cited issues of credibility from online news websites that make them prone to unverified content and fake news.

### Community meetings

The study also explored the perception and view of the residents in the efficacy of community meetings in meeting their information needs as a community.

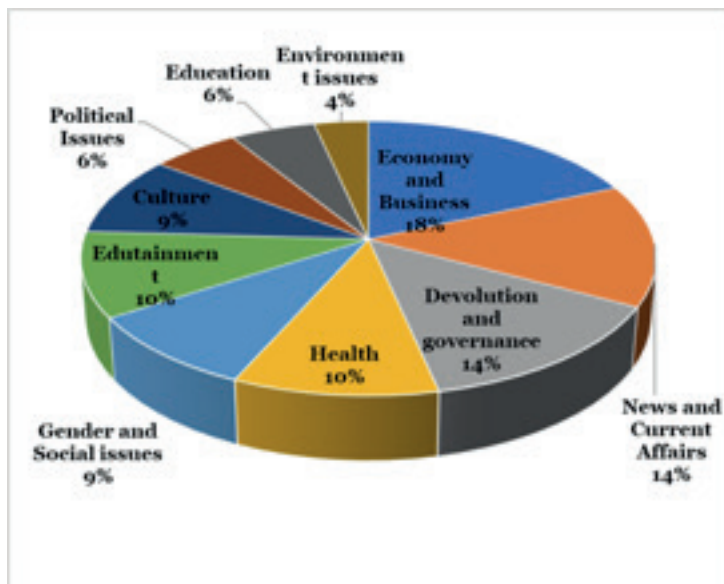
Positive affirmation of the community meetings was provided by 18% (above average) and 26% (excellent). They highlighted that the community meetings were excellent as localised platforms of communication. They provided the opportunity for dialogic communication and generating feedback. 28% of the respondents indicated that the community meetings were average. They highlighted that the participation was not guaranteed as other commitments were prioritised. They also expressed concern at the relevance of the information they receive at the meetings to their specific personal needs. 14% of the respondents agreed that the community meetings were below average and poor.



They cited that in some instances the community meetings were dictated by the power hierarchies such as the leadership, who have the most of the time to speak and the ordinary citizens were denied the opportunity. They also highlighted that community meetings were transcended by the power binaries of gender such that women were not accorded the power and platforms to speak as equals to men. In some of the districts advancing urbanisation was rendering the meetings challenging. Other reasons for the average and poor efficacy of the meetings was that they also become platforms for manipulation by political parties.

### Ideal information covered by community radio

The communities highlighted that they preferred the community radio stations to include more information and programming on the economy and business (18%). This included information on the national economy, local economy and provincial economy. This also included the capacitation of women and youth to partake in economic opportunities within their areas and how they can best grow their community by that. It was also outlined that the business aspect had to be promoted on community radio. At the time of gathering the responses, the law was forbidding community radio from engaging in business activity, advertising and marketing of commercial services. However, a recent amendment to the law SI 120 of 2023 now approves advertising for local businesses operating within the community.



The implications for the inclusion of economy and business issues is that it would also boost revenue generation by the local community radio station. The economy and business also included how locals could benefit from the resources, which are available in their locality. An example is the case of Binga and Kariba communities, who highlighted that they expected Kasambabezi FM and Twasumpuka FM to give them a platform with more information on fishing activities in their areas.

News and current affairs issues were rated 14% of the preferred and ideal programming on community radio. The respondents indicated that there was a news provision gap, in particular news addressing the district in which the community radio is located and the districts within the same province. They also said from this the news can be national and give information about other events across the country. They also

highlighted that they wanted to know more about international news. They, however, highlighted that there was need for the news to be devoid of excessive gatekeeping characterised by what they termed political interference, which 'makes us hear what they want'. Instead community radio stations should provide locals the opportunity to be news sources. The respondents also highlighted the importance of news formats, which are diverse such as sports news and entertainment news (socialites and celebrities). They also highlighted the importance of news, which reflects the ethnic and cultural diversity of the areas, citing that there was the tendency to use one language, which is dominant in an area. For example residents in Beitbridge acknowledged that while using Venda mostly in the programming was understandable, there was a need to have news which is inclusive of other languages spoken in the area such as Sotho. Similar findings were recorded in Kariba where the use of Zezuru has to be balanced with the use of Tonga, which is spoken by some of the residents in the area, which borders Binga.

Devolution and governance issues were rated at 14%. Much of these issues were around concerns that community radio stations should broadcast information, which integrates the grassroots into the governance and democracy discourse. This involves the platform for residents to air views on issues such as corruption, resource distribution, national and local budgetary allocations and votes as well as community and infrastructure development. Discourse about localised development was how stations' programmes on current affairs and debates can enable them to ask the pertinent questions about the governance process and issues to do with devolution and management of localities. They highlighted how they have pertinent issues with the devolution process, which then can contribute to the betterment of their areas.

Health issues were rated 10%: the non-provision of adequate sexual health reproductive rights education on radio was a challenge in the information matrix. They also highlighted the importance of health education programs targeting child killer diseases, malaria, tuberculosis, HIV AIDS and cancer. The impact of drug abuse on health was another area of programming intervention they suggested for on radio. They highlighted that there was a rise in mental health disorders in their areas, which made it important to address through radio programming targeting mental illness.

Communities suggested the inclusion of edutainment (10%). This was centered on edutainment drama and plays on different issues such as cultural activities, the impact of gendered violence and impact of exclusionary practices on social cohesion. They highlighted this would increase agency and social capital in the community. This would also target children programming, youths programming and social issues, which are usually difficult to articulate 'with a straight face'. Some of the programming suggestions were quizzes, youth empowerment programs and reading of local novels

Culture issues were rated 9%. This included suggestions for documentaries on local cultural, community history and ethnic lineages to document these developments. Some suggested the inclusion of historical and cultural commentators and local leaders on radio to improve the product offering. This could also highlight on cultural practice to stem the vices of premarital sex, disrespect for elders, promoting local languages and improving appreciation of local heritage.

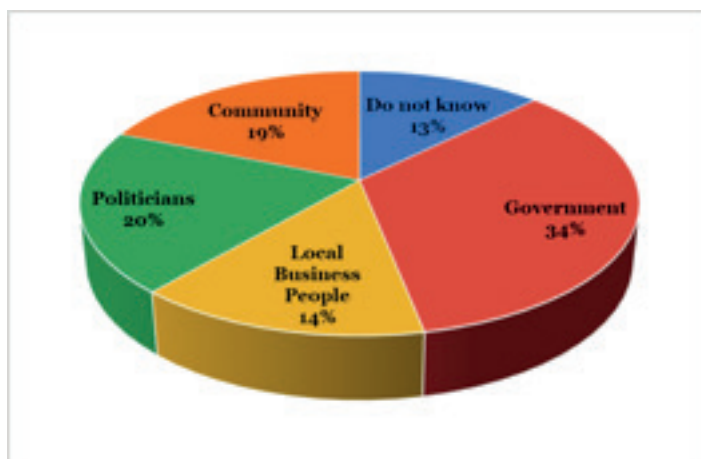
Community radio stations had the potential to play a vital role in promoting democracy by providing a platform for political discussions and debates as suggested by 9%. One way to include politics on a community radio station was by hosting political debates among different candidates. This will provide an opportunity for voters to hear directly from the candidates and make informed decisions, in particular during an election year such as 2023. The debates will be conducted in a fair and unbiased manner, with equal time given to each candidate. Another way to include politics on a community radio station was by broadcasting campaign messages from different candidates. However, it is important to ensure that the messages are fact-checked and do not contain any false or misleading information. The community radio station can provide voter education by broadcasting information about the voting process, including how to register to vote, how to cast a ballot, and what to expect on election day. This will ensure that voters are informed and prepared to participate in the democratic process.

In terms of education, the respondents highlighted that they aspired for radio lessons to be broadcast on their platforms. This includes radio lessons for learners to catch up and even the adults to be educated on different aspects. They highlighted that the education on radio should include teachers, who can teach Continuous Assessment Learning Activities (CALA) aspects on radio as it was proving to be difficult for both the learners and their guardians or parents to comprehend. They highlighted that radio can simplify the complex and be a viable alternative given that the communities struggle to afford internet connectivity for research. The education should also include the informative school curriculum based plays, which simplify concepts. They also added that they needed information about tertiary education as they aspire for better attainments.

The communities emphasised the importance of environment related information (4%) on radio. This included information on climate change and how it was impacting the communities as well as mitigation strategies. They also aspired to hear more about human wildlife conflict as was the case with Kasambabezi, Lyeja, Avuxeni and Lotsha FM respondents whose communities' border wildlife national parks. They also highlighted the importance of environment programs on radio where they can highlight the indigenous knowledge systems (IKS), which can be applied for effective environmental protection. They also called for a platform to discuss environmental degradation in their communities, effective waste disposal and other related issues.

### Perceptions on ownership of news platforms

The perceptions of the community members on ownership of the broadcasting platforms was administered through the questionnaire. The responses are illustrated below:

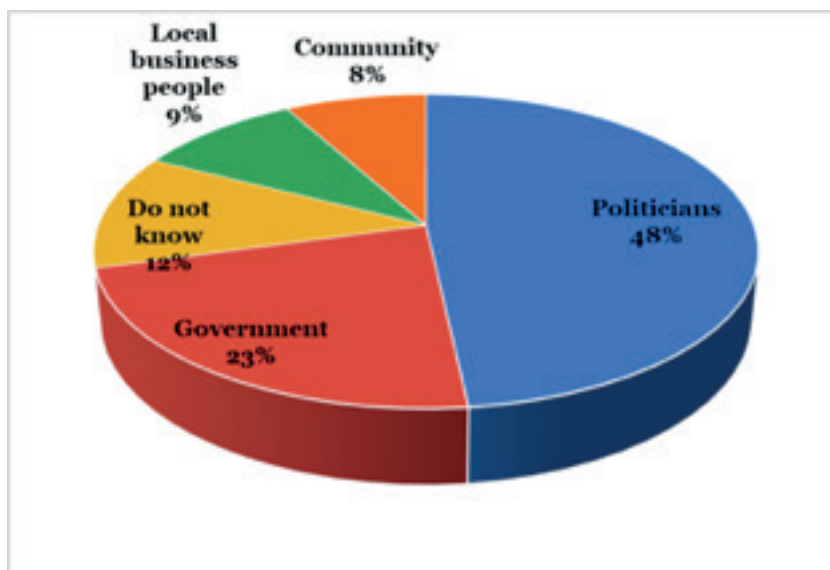


The respondents perceived that the government (34%) was the owner of digital media platforms. Politicians were perceived to be owners by 20% of the respondents. The local community were regarded as the real owners of the stations by 19%. 14% were of the view that it is local business people who own the stations, while 13% said they do not know.



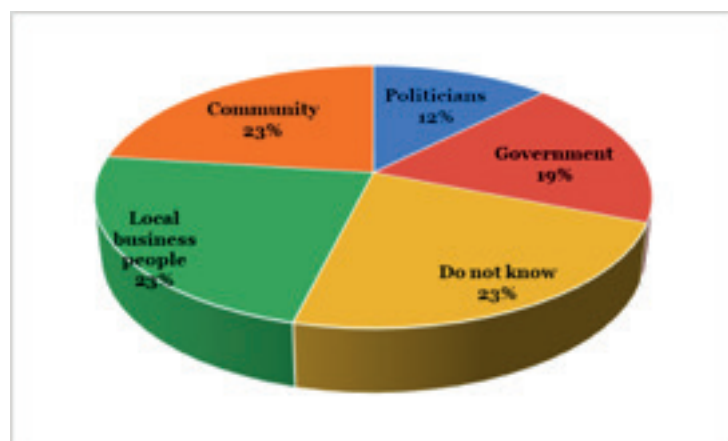
## Interests propagated on community radio platforms

The views, which are promoted on the platforms were also asked of the respondents. The analysis is highlighted below.



The majority of the respondents highlighted that the views of politicians (48%) were promoted on the community platforms. Views from the government carried 23% of the respondents' perceptions. 12% said they do not know. 9% of the respondents said that the views of local business people were carried by the platforms with the community interests being 8%. The perceptions reflect an imbalance in the advancement of the ordinary man's views on radio and this is because community platforms according to the respondents were controlled by the elite in the form of government and political actors from the ruling party.

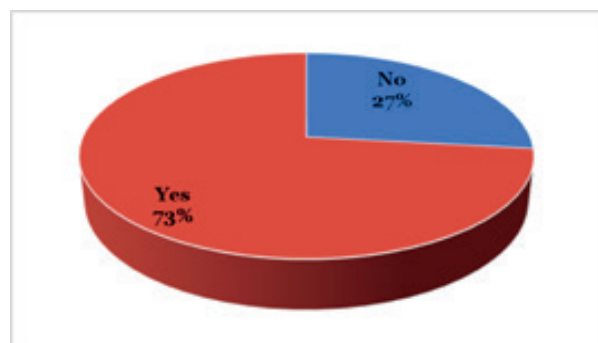
## Interests propagated on digital media platforms



The responses indicated that there was a 23% tie on community, local business people and those who do not know when it came to the perception of whose content prevails on digital media platforms. The community ratio was high indicating a grass-roots participation approach. This was driven by how communities controlled WhatsApp groups and Facebook pages. It also reflected how digital news websites sourced their news from the grassroots and framed the narrative from the grassroots. Government control was perceived by 19%. There was diminished government control in digital platforms, indicating they had a higher degree of freedom of expression. The same was perceived on politicians who were

controlling 12% of narratives on digital platforms.

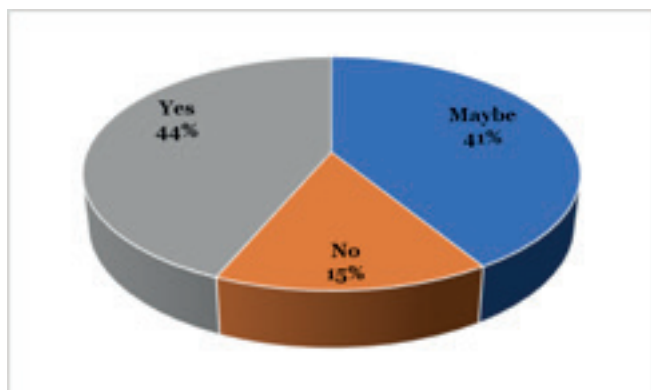
## Does ownership influence content broadcast by community radio?



The majority 73% indicated yes against 27% who said no. Respondents highlighted that the ownership structure of community radio stations influenced the content broadcast by community radio stations. Residents lamented that station managers always dictate what they want people to hear and traditional leaders were also found to be influencing the stations programming as the case with chiefs in Chiredzi (Avuxeni FM). Those who said yes indicated that because the platforms seem to be forced to broadcast politics,

which are one sided as government and politicians controlled the content and interfered in day to day operations. Language and ethnic politics were at play as some stations experienced language struggles. Local business people have the resources to start the stations. Those who said no highlighted that most of the information is about current affairs that are relatable. This was characterised by a variety of interviews including the community members on air and some local people work as presenters at the stations. Some said that the radio is owned by the community so they also influence the content because the radio puts programs that engage the listeners.

### Views shared by digital platforms reflect the views of the owners



The reasons given for 'maybe' included the views that sometimes it is grapevine and fake messages on the WhatsApp groups. There were also other issues of freedom of expression where a person can share what she/he wants but thereafter comments won't be guarded and some highlighted that they were not able to fully operate digital devices. Some highlighted that there was an information overload from political and government players. Sometimes they share relevant information but sometimes the community gets frustrated because of the biased information shared on social media platforms.

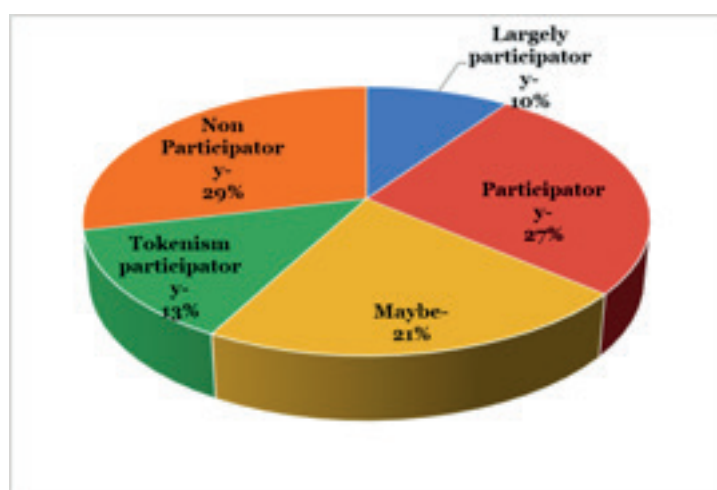
The reasons given for 'no' were that the owners never consult; the information shared via WhatsApp might not represent the view of others and because the station touches more programs of the community and allows the community members to participate. Mostly it is about entertainment and is open for all.

The reasons for 'yes' were that the views are of the editors, who are sharing the information and the content shared is from the community by the community so their views are largely represented. Digital platforms also provide political posts about who to vote and events that will occur pertaining to various parties involved. Some added that because people discuss issues if they are posted on digital platforms meaning they are interested in them, hence they reflect the views of the owners (because the platforms belong to the community).

### Participation dynamics of the election

Community members were asked about the participation dynamics in the radio programming. They were given options on a Likert scale on a scale of 5-1, largely participatory to non-participatory:

- Largely participatory
- Participatory
- Maybe
- Tokenism participatory
- Non-participatory



Only 10% said that they were largely participatory. This was in the case of Madziwa FM, which held an all stakeholders meeting to educate the community. Community members said that they influence the content. To a larger extent because they are allowed to advertise their products and participate on the radio station's programs. Additionally for the community, the stations had relevant and relatable news about the community.

The participatory category (27%) indicated that there is an interactive WhatsApp group in which community. In the case of Vemuganga FM, the station is represented in the wards through citizen journalists. In Chimanimani the station respondents said that they were consulted

by the chief. They also added that one local radio presenter is present in the community.

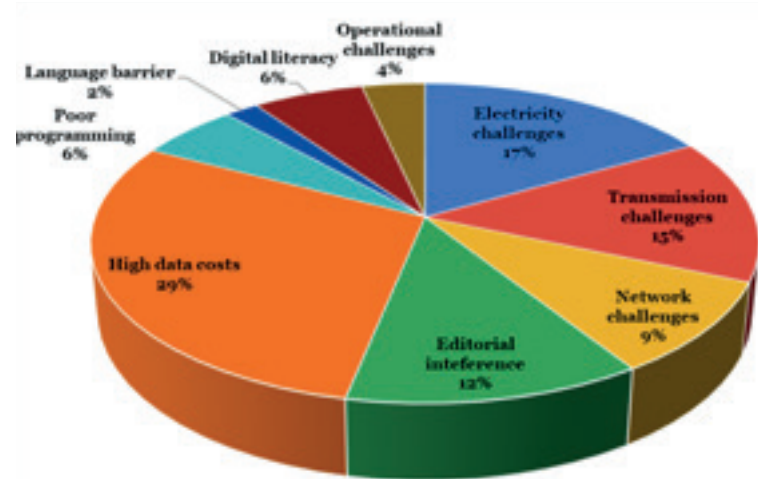
Those who said maybe (21%) highlighted that contributions from the community are trickling in, they are contributing and more is expected. They gave reasons that the government controls what they want to feed to the community. Government owns the community radio station, its independence is not practical as it cannot source its own money to run its programs. One respondent said that it's average because a lot of things happen behind the scenes that they do not know about and that the community is not ready to talk about the issues

In the tokenism level (13%) said people are asked to highlight their views. The community is not much aware of how to influence or to participate in what should be aired or to manage community radios. A case was highlighted from Mbembesi (Ingqanga FM) and Plumtree (Radio Bukalanga) where the struggle for language hegemony was evident. Mbembesi is predominantly a Xhosa area, but people of a Ndebele origin were also keen on the language and practices to be broadcast. The same was applicable to Bukalanga Plumtree where there was a language struggle between the predominantly Kalanga and the minority Tswana community.

In the non-participatory response 29% said that they are not given opportunities and there is no awareness on the purpose of the radio station and it is like more political views were considered at its birth. Some residents also said that there was ignorance in the community about community broadcasting. The politics of language was also considered to be key barriers to participation. Some languages were not broadcast and the community only consumed what they are given.

**Challenges experienced in accessing information from community radio stations and digital media platforms**

The respondents were asked about the challenges faced in accessing information from community radio stations and digital media platforms. The responses are outlined below



The responses highlighted that they experienced data challenges, poor network and limited digital literacy. The network for community radio stations was for instance not ranging beyond 15km from the station. This left the majority disenfranchised. Electricity challenges were cited as another factor as respondents could not use their mobile devices and the community stations could not broadcast due to power outages. They did not have the capacity to purchase power backup such as solar systems or generators. Another challenge was the breakdown in transmission from the mobile network operators (MNO) and the Transmedia transmitters.

This limited the participation of the communities in the media space and accessing information. Abuse of social media by publishing fake news, and the high costs were another barrier to accessing information by the communities. The issue of editorial consideration was another factor as respondents highlighted that the content was highly editorialised and this left them out of the debates. For community radio stations, the respondents said they did not trust or did not get authentic information. Some are shy and afraid of being identified, especially on sensitive issues. The digital divide also translated into technological devices being difficult to own and operate such as a mobile device (smartphone).

### **Benefits of the community and digital media**

The respondents highlighted that the benefits of the community station include improved perception of the world and their being, widening knowledge about issues. They highlighted that the music program was important in winding down during tough times, gaining information, environmental updates, fishing updates, news on what is happening in the community and also the world at large and access to information anytime through social media platforms. In contrast, some said the benefits were not so much as the station was not offering much community focused issues. Some highlighted that the stations promoted disaster preparedness whilst some also added that they can sell online, they can talk to relatives through interactive programs on radio stations, they can ask questions on radio or digital media platforms which makes them feel involved and they can discuss issues on digital media platforms.

Health awareness was being addressed and with digital platforms they can communicate with immediacy. One respondent from Avuxeni added that local WhatsApp groups were important in curbing crimes such as stock theft. Community radio stations are controlled by regulatory authorities and with digital media platforms, citizens are free to select and for community stations content is in the respective local language.

### **Advantages of community and digital over mainstream media**

The research found that community radio and digital media have become increasingly popular in recent years due to several advantages they offer over mainstream media. Community radio and digital media provided a platform for local voices and perspectives to be heard, which is often overlooked by mainstream media. This allows for a diversity of opinions and ideas to be shared, which can lead to a more informed and engaged community. Additionally, community radio and digital media are often more accessible and affordable than mainstream media, making it easier for individuals and communities to participate in the creation and dissemination of content. Furthermore, community radio and digital media can create a sense of community and belonging by providing a space for individuals to connect and share their experiences.

### **Community recommendations**

- Recognition of community broadcasting a viable third tier of the broadcast media by policymakers and transcending to communities and media markets
- Increased government support to community radio stations through transparent funding models.
- There should be recognition of volunteer engagement to ensure the retainment and building capacity.
- Increasing access to broadcasts through widened transmission.



The background image shows a radio broadcast studio. In the foreground, there is a desk with a mixing console, a computer monitor, a keyboard, and a mouse. Two microphones on stands are positioned in front of the desk. In the background, there is a wall with a sign that reads "PAMANA KAPUJI SUN 11 T-SUN 12". The entire image is covered with a semi-transparent purple overlay.

# Structure and Ownership of the Newly Licensed Community Radio Stations

## A. Structure and ownership of the newly licensed community radio stations

Community radio stations were licensed commencing 2020 by BAZ. They complete the three tier broadcasting model envisaged under the Broadcasting Services Act (BSA 2001).

### COMMUNITY RADIO STATIONS

	Name of Station	Province	City / Town	Ownership	Year Issued
1.	Chimanimani FM	Manicaland	Chimanimani	Chimanimani Community Radio Station Trust	2021
2.	Nyangani FM	Manicaland	Nyanga	Nyangani Community Radio Trust	2020
3.	Avuxeni FM	Masvingo	Chiredzi	Chiredzi Rural Communities Development Initiative Trust	2020
4.	Ndau FM	Manicaland	Chipinge (Garahwa)	Ndau Community Radio Station Trust	2021
5.	Ntepe Manama	Matabeleland South	Gwanda	Ntepe-Manama Community Radio Trust	2020
6.	Lotsha FM	Matabeleland South	Beitbridge	Beitbridge- Shashe Community Radio Broadcasting Trust	2021
7.	Radio Bukalanga	Matabeleland South	Mangwe	Radio Bukalanga Pvt Ltd	2021
8.	VeMuganga FM	Manicaland	Chipinge (Checheche)	Vemuganga Community Radio Trust	2021
9.	Bayethe FM	Matabeleland South	Plumtree	Matobo Community Radio Trust	2021
10.	Twasumpuka FM	Matabeleland North	Binga	Twasumpuka Community Radio Trust	2021
11.	Kasambabezi FM	Mashonaland West	Kariba	Patsaka NyamiNyami Community Radio Trust	2021
12.	Madziwa FM	Mashonaland Central	Shamva	Madziwa Community Radio Trust	2021
13.	Lyeja FM	Matabeleland North	Hwange	Lyeja-Nyayi Development Trust	2021
14.	Inganga FM	Matabeleland South	Mbembesi	Mbembesi Development Trust	2021

*Licensed community radio stations in Zimbabwe*

The study found that there were 14 registered community radio stations. Of these, three were licensed in 2020, with the first being Ntepe –Manama in Gwanda. The other 11 were licensed in 2021. In terms of ownership the radio stations are owned by community trusts, usually taking after the name of the community trust.

In terms of the community radio station structure they have an organogram, which is nearly similar and common

across the board. This is made up of the Board of Trustees, General Council, Station Management Committee and the volunteers (community radio journalists).

**The Board of Trustees** operates to protect the interests of the trust, invest and mobilise resources on behalf of the trust, appoint employees for the trust and provide oversight to the management.

**The General Council** is responsible for policy and decision making, representing the interests of the trust. The General Council is envisaged to be made up of all ward representatives from within the community

**The Station Management Committee** is composed of the station manager, heads of departments and other support staff. These are, who operate under contracts.

### **A politicised governance structure**

A name search at the Deeds Office did not yield the desired results, as there is bureaucracy. Nevertheless the findings reflected that there were issues with the composition of the trust boards and trustees. A station manager noted that

*«What we desire for as a truly representative community station is not catered for here. The political leadership of the community stations is politician, some serving in the ruling party and prominent local business persons.»*

The ownership of the community radio stations was not clear regarding the inclusion of the community (grassroots) in the formulation of the community stations. In some instances active ruling party officials (senior officials at parochial levels) were the trustees of the community radio stations. Following years of government reluctance to call for the licensing of community stations, the government then announced that the license was to first include rural and remote areas. This set the tone for the involvement of elites in rural areas in the formation of community radio stations. The appointment of station managers, the research found was done through a close consultation between the local political leadership and other state actors. This weakens the very notion of community broadcasting as de institutionalised, depoliticised and democratised. In some of the community stations, the station managers were politically active and associated persons whose political affiliation was known in favour of the ruling party. Additionally in some of the stations the station managers were persons with a military background. This was noted as a challenge towards impartiality of community broadcasting as called for by the law.

In terms of meaning making, the respondent from the Ministry of Information said the:

*«Community radio stations are permitted to broadcast election unrelated issues. These included delimitation, voter registration and election results. There is nothing political about that.»*

The study further sought the view of the ministry who highlighted that there is a ban on political messaging, with coverage being accepted for Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) officials. Community radio stations can broadcast information from ZEC and the government, rather than political parties. The respondents said that there is a thin line between government and party messaging, urging community radio stations to be careful of what they broadcast and differentiate party slogans from government messaging.

### **B. Government affiliated community radio stations**

Literature has shown that the Zimbabwean government tends to grant licenses to pro-government individuals or groups to control the production and consumption of content by the public. The licensing of community radio through non-governmental organisations may have given the government some influence over these organisations. However, community radio broadcasting should not be dependent on local non-governmental organisations. The nature of community radio broadcasting requires local people to participate as producers, managers, journalists, and audience members and to be custodians of their own community radio.

An analysis of the 14 licensed stations, nine did not commence as community initiatives. Rather they were formed through NGOs, which were created in anticipation of the call for licenses from BAZ. These nine stations are Avuxeni FM, Ndau FM, Chimanimani FM, Lyeja FM, Ingganga FM, Bayethe FM, Nyangani FM, Lotsha FM and Radio Bukalanga. The study findings indicate that there was some government influence in the licensing of community stations. Evidence includes the “going on air” of the first four community stations by the government, which were established in response to the

call to increase disaster preparedness: Avuxeni, Chimanimani, Nyangani, and Nda FM.

In the case of Nda FM, they were the first to receive equipment despite the existence of a Community Radio Initiative (CRI), Vemuganga. The same is true for the licensing of Lyeja FM and Hwange FM. Hwange FM was the CRI, but was surpassed by Lyeja in terms of licensing and equipment issuance by BAZ. Up to this day Hwange FM is not yet licensed. A similar finding was reflected in Beitbridge where Dulibadzimu FM, a community initiative was not awarded the license with Lotsha FM securing it. The same applied in Chiredzi where Avuxeni was licensed ahead of a CRI, Radio Tsakani. A further exploration of the 'hidden agenda' can be located in the licensing sequence where CRI Ntepe-Manana, Tsasumpuka, Vemuganga, Madziwa and Kasambambezi were licensed last after the other station, as a result of the advocacy

This has given birth to quasi government community radio stations, which are under ruling party and government control. In several African regions, radio remains limited to station-based transmission via digital or analogue airwaves to radio sets and mobile phone handsets, under state license. This approach restricts community participation and feedback. In Zimbabwe, radio station licensing is politically motivated, with the authority prohibiting CRSs from airing political news. The government also schedules times to take over stations for broadcasting "public messages". Unused government time is accumulated for future use. Essentially, CRSs are tightly controlled by the State and can be stopped from broadcasting for violating any of numerous regulations.

In some of the responses from questionnaires and community focus groups, there was confusion as to the distinction between a community radio station and commercial radio station. For instance in Rusape, the respondents were of the view that Diamond FM is the community radio station in the province. This is not a surprising finding given that initial debates on community radio licensing had been framed as commercial.

### **C. Sustainability challenges**

The study found that community radio stations were facing operational challenges. These are due to operating in an economy where the currency is failing. However there were mitigation strategies towards sustainability.

Research findings on the sustainability of community radio stations were obtained through interviews with the Ministry of Information, Publicity and Broadcasting Services and BAZ. The study revealed that community radio stations face significant financial challenges, which hinder their ability to operate sustainably. This is due to limited funding from both government and non-governmental organisations, which results in inadequate resources to run the stations effectively.

Moreover, the study highlighted content production limitations as another challenge faced by community radio stations. Due to a lack of resources, most community radio stations are unable to produce high-quality content consistently, which affects their ability to attract and retain listeners.

The study also found that the high cost of licensing from BAZ is a significant financial challenge faced by community radio stations. The BSA charges are monthly fees for \$30 USD, and license fees \$800, which is a considerable amount for most community radio stations. This high cost of licensing results in inadequate resources to run the stations effectively, which affects their ability to attract and retain listeners.

In addition to licensing fees, community radio stations also face broadcast taxes and corporate taxes, which further increase their financial burden. These taxes are necessary for the government to generate revenue, but they also contribute to the financial challenges faced by community radio stations.

Furthermore, the lack of investment in Zimbabwe's broadcasting sector is another significant challenge faced by community radio stations. The lack of investment results in inadequate resources to run the stations effectively, which affects their ability to produce high-quality content consistently. This lack of investment also limits the ability of community radio stations to adopt new technologies and equipment that could improve their operations.

The financial challenges faced by community radio stations in Zimbabwe are multifaceted and require a concerted effort from various stakeholders to address them. The high cost of licensing from BAZ, broadcast taxes, corporate taxes, and the lack of investment in Zimbabwe's broadcasting sector are some of the significant challenges that need to be addressed to ensure the sustainability of community radio stations.

In an interview the respondent from BAZ responded that they are collaborating with UNESCO to enhance the capacity and sustainability of the 14 community radio stations. Additionally, the ministry is working on amending the Broadcasting Services Act to redefine foreign funding. This would allow Zimbabweans living abroad to support their respective community radio stations by sending back remittances. As social enterprises, community radio stations cannot generate revenue from advertising, which is reserved for commercial radio stations.



*«The idea is that the community station must rely on their own resources and funding. This calls for inward looking resource mobilization within the communities for the station to thrive.»*

This includes training for presenters, producers and station managers in terms of practical dimensions of the job. However the study also found that there were unfair practices when it comes to the skilling and capacity building of the community stations. For instance some stations received direct support from the government while others were sidelined. Station managers noted that there was a pattern of some stations receiving support from the government directly while others which commenced as initiatives under ZACRAS were not getting the material and financial support.

#### **D. Content**

The study found that the issue of content was delicate and problematic for the stations. As a result the government representative said that as a policy that was assisting the community stations to come up with content. This included the collaboration between commercial radio stations and sharing of information to reach out to diverse publics. Some of the content benign spruced up for by the ministry includes voter education and election related material, education radio lessons and the government was subsidising significantly for the statutes. A respondent said that:

*«For instance, we will have voter education polling, nomination court and accreditation. All these need publicity and we have to be found with the right content»*

Research findings have revealed that community radio journalists face several challenges in generating content for their stations. One of the significant challenges is the high cost of accreditation. Accreditation is necessary for journalists to access official events and information, but the high cost of accreditation limits the number of journalists, who can access such events. This results in inadequate coverage of events, which affects the quality and quantity of content produced.

Another challenge faced by community radio journalists is the lack of training. Most community radio journalists lack formal training in journalism, which affects their ability to produce high-quality content consistently. This lack of training also limits their ability to adopt new technologies and techniques that could improve their operations.

Moreover, the lack of equipment is another significant challenge faced by community radio journalists. Most community radio stations lack basic equipment such as computers, microphones, and cameras, which affects the quality of content produced. This lack of equipment also limits the ability of journalists to produce content remotely, which is crucial during emergencies.

Finally, the lack of funding to pay independent content producers is another challenge faced by community radio journalists. Independent content producers play a crucial role in generating content for community radio stations, but most stations lack adequate funding to pay them. This results in inadequate compensation for their work, which affects their motivation and ability to produce high-quality content consistently.

# Unpacking Ownership, Content & Control Of The Community Radios



# Unpacking ownership, content and control of the CRs

## 1. Ntepe Manama

### Background



Ntepe Manama is a community radio station located in Gwanda south rural. Its station is near Manama High School. The community radio is an initiative of Ntepe community members and it was inaugurated under the guidance of the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) in 2009. In December 2020, Ntepe Manama became the first community radio station to be licensed and went on air on 2 September 2022.

The station covers 13 wards (ward 9,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19,20,23 and 24) and uses Sotho, Ndebele and Venda as the main broadcasting languages. Its vision is to be a competitive station that will develop the community through information dissemination, improve its culture and resuscitate local languages using radio as a tool for development.

### Ownership and control

The station has a board that governs activities of the station and has a secretariat that runs the day-to-day activities. The board is composed of local community members drawn from the wards that it covers. The board has been inducted and trained on some basic governance practices through the station's membership to ZACRAS. Participants largely agreed that the level of independence of their community radio is relatively low. Participants cited several challenges, such as limited financial resources, political interference, and government regulations that restrict freedom of expression. Lack of objective reporting and self-censorship were identified as significant obstacles to achieving true independence.

### Operational History

Since its establishment in 2009, Ntepe Manama community radio station started issuing out newsletters and compact discs as means of availing information to the community members. With advancements in technology, the stations' strategy changed. Currently the station is on air and broadcasts 18 hours as per regulation. It has bulk SMS platforms and social media platforms, which are alternatives for listeners outside the service broadcast. The station has a target read of more than 10000 in all its platforms.

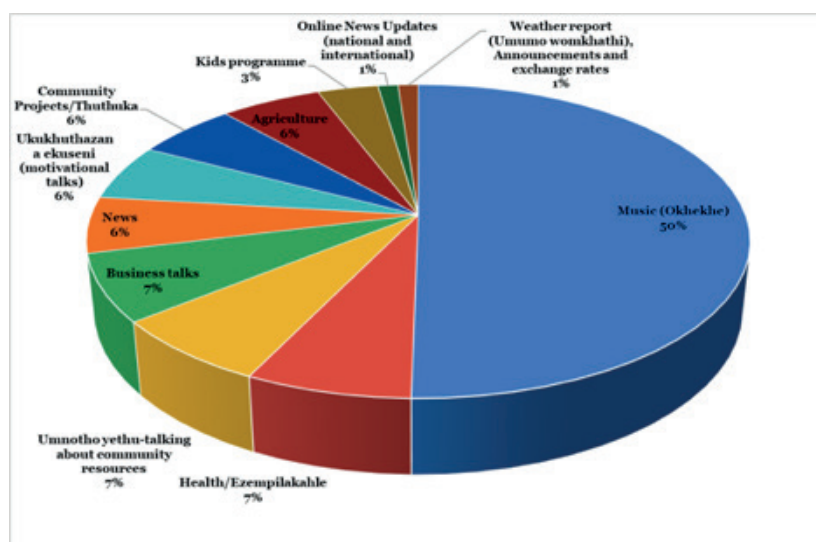
### Content

Ntepe Manama broadcasts content mostly in Sotho, and a mixture of IsiNdebele. Many participants reported instances of self-censorship due to fears of repercussions from political parties. The discussions revealed a prevailing view that community radio stations should exist as platforms for open dialogue, unbiased reporting, and democratic values.

Below are the main shows that are broadcast by the Manama community radio station

- Ezemidlalo – a kids' program
- Mirupa Mirupi – program discussing social matters in the community
- Aritswani – program exploring the culture
- Morning cruise –infotainment program

In terms of the programming schedule, most of the programming was occupied by music



Music occupied a 50% share of programming space, followed by Health; Community Resources and Business Talk (all with 7%). Motivational talk; Community Projects and Agriculture (all 6%) provided the third largest band of programming space. Kids programming, which included phone-ins and WhatsApp messaging provided 3% of programming space. Online news updates and community announcements garnered 1% each

### Sustainability Plan

The station has fundraising committees servicing all the wards. The station also has a business plan that seeks to enable long term sustainability of the station's operations. At present the station is not financially stable as it relies on seed funding from development agency UNESCO, government support and sponsored programs from non-governmental organisations. The organisation is planning to do gardening and poultry projects and then later shift into goat farming. The radio station's leadership expressed grave concerns about the size of their audience, arguing that there was no need for a commercial radio and that instead, their present transmitter, which has a range of less than 20 kilometers should be upgraded.

### Recommendations for Ntepe

Based on the findings from the focus group discussion, the following recommendations were proposed:

Efforts should be made to secure sustainable funding for Ntepe Manama. This could include exploring partnerships with local organisations and establishment of a business unit.

Training programs for staff and volunteers should be implemented to enhance financial management skills and fundraising capabilities.

Engaging with policymakers and relevant stakeholders to enact policies that protect the rights of community radio stations should be prioritised.

Increasing media literacy programs aimed at empowering individuals to critically consume and analyse information from diverse sources should be considered.

## 2. Nda FM

### Ownership and control



The legal status of the station as a Trust implies that the station is owned by the community. Board members (Board of Trustees) were selected from the community and the community's role as the owners of the station was to select the trustees. The Board of Trustees is currently at the helm of the station's organisational structure followed by the secretariat, which is led by the station coordinator. Other roles at the secretariat level are yet to be established. The Board of Trustees composition for Nda FM comprises the chairperson, vice-chairperson, secretary, treasurer, vice treasurer and two committee members. However, in terms of control, the station management reports to politically vested stakeholders such as the ruling party leadership and the government appointed district development coordinator (DDC)

### Operational history

Nda FM was licensed in 2021. The station license was awarded to the Nda Community Radio Trust, which is trading as Nda FM, broadcasting to parts of the Chipinge community who are the main beneficiaries and using Shona dialects (Nda, Manyika, and Karanga), Tsonga and English languages. Nda FM was licensed together with Vemuganga, with Nda being installed as the cultural preservation arm for the Nda people of Chipinge and Vemuganga, serving the interest of the non-Nda.

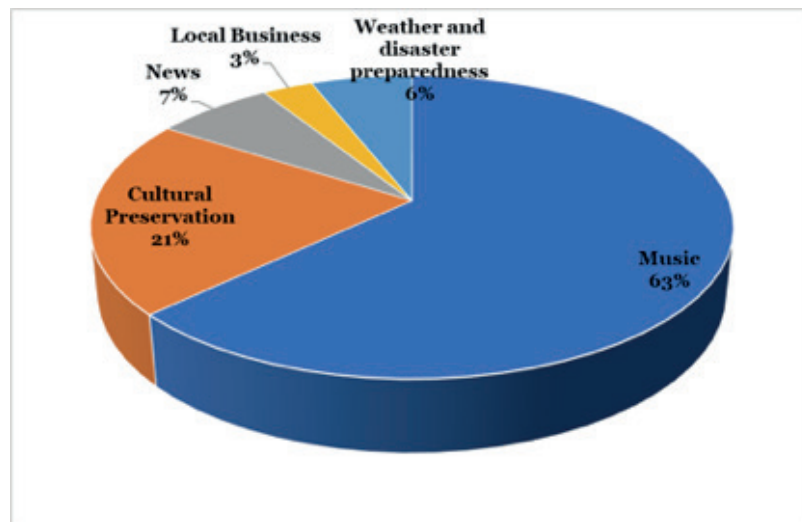
Of particular research interest is the fact that the trust was established in the same year the station was licensed (2021). Essentially the station emerged a year after BAZ advertised a call for aspiring broadcasting institutions to apply for campus and community radio broadcasting licenses. The BAZ call was made in February 2020 and Nda Community Radio Trust was established in February 2021.

The community's role in the day to day running of the station is mirrored in the Board's overseeing role at the station as well as the envisaged involvement of volunteers from the community. Nda FM also remains accountable to the Chipinge community through holding of regular stakeholders' meetings.



## Content

In terms of broadcasting content, Nda FM's niche is mirrored in an editorial focus concentrated in thematic areas of cultural preservation that include education, entertainment, preservation of culture and upholding of moral values of a diverse cultural background in the community. However, the station is yet to draft an operational editorial policy.



Most of the stations programming is based on music (63%). This is followed by cultural preservation (21%), News (7%), Weather and disaster preparedness (6%) and Local business activities (3%). To reach out to its audiences, the station uses live FM broadcasting and social media. Social media usage mainly caters for those members of the audience, who are beyond the local radius reach. On social media, Nda FM is currently using Facebook and WhatsApp platforms. The station's role in the local community includes promoting peace and unity, bridging gaps between the underprivileged and the middle income earners. In serving the needs of its listeners, the station is also involved in promoting cultural heritage and history as well as encouraging social and economic development.

## Sustainability plan

In terms of sustainability for skills, Nda FM staff were trained by Perch Media to be able to operate machinery and equipment. However, a sustainability challenge is that the trained staff are leaving the station regularly in search of greener pastures. The representatives from the station noted that the inadequacy of remuneration was causing a negative impact on the station's operations. The station, like other community radio stations, was not allowed to advertise by law. To mitigate against damage caused by the aforementioned sustainability challenges, the station has initiated sponsored programs. At the time of applying, Nda FM faced a number of challenges, chief among these being financial. The station struggled to source financial resources for operational costs such as printing, photocopying, and transport within the locality as well as to submit the applications to Harare. The station is also facing operational challenges relating to power outages. Over the past year, Zimbabwe has been facing power outages that have crippled operations for businesses and organisations. The Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority (ZESA) has cited vandalism of its infrastructure, but experts say power generation is being crippled by a lack of investment in renewable energy. Nda FM has thus struggled to maintain the requisite 18 hours of broadcasting due the incessant power cuts. The station indicated that they need a power back up system to mitigate against the interruptions caused by the power cuts. Nda FM also believes that government policy which prohibits community radio stations from advertising should be scrapped so that the stations are able to raise funds to sustain daily operations. Nda FM also advocates for the licensing of more community radio stations to cover as much radius in the communities as possible.

### 3. VeMuganga CR

#### Ownership and control



Vemuganga CR is owned by the Vemuganga Community Radio Trust. The station covers the area around Chipinge Checheche- Chibuwe. According to documents availed by BAZ, the station is owned by the community trust, which is represented by locals. Vemuganga is a product of a community mobilisation and identification of the common goals, which the community of Chipinge identify with. The common binding objective of Vemuganga is to unify and upscale the usage of local languages in the district.

#### Operational History

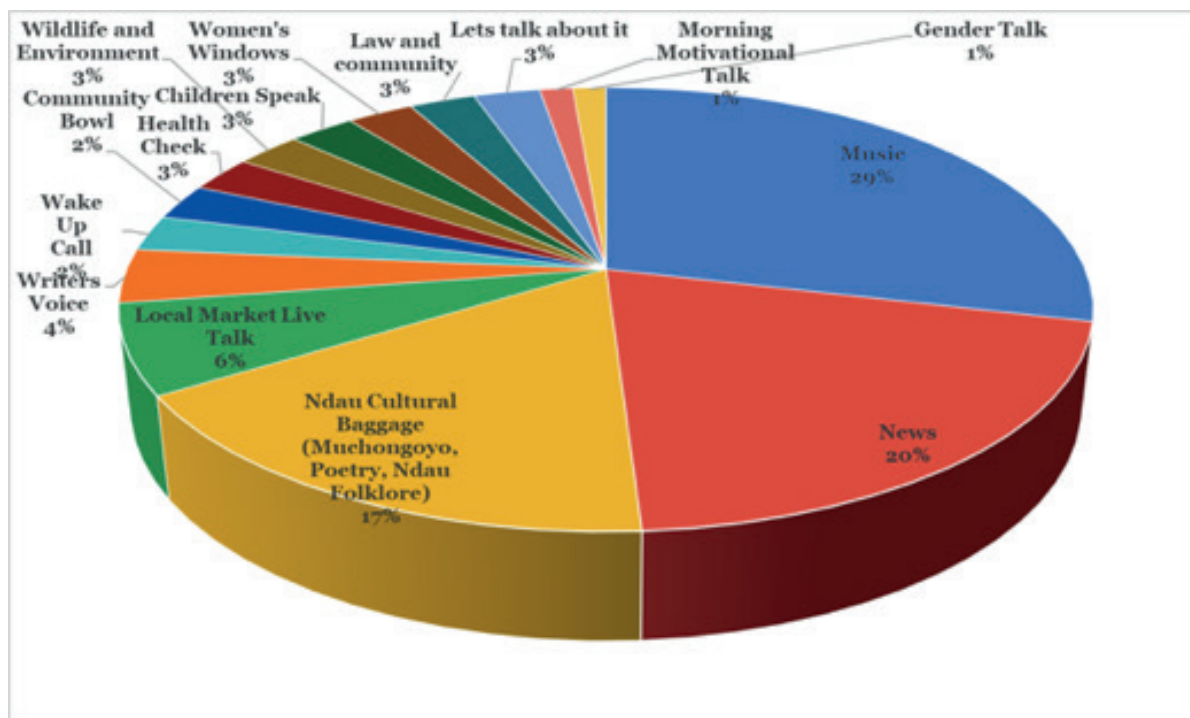
Vemuganga Radio is located in Chipinge, in rural Manicaland Province in south eastern Zimbabwe. Licensed in 2021, the community radio station serves a community with diverse languages Ndaou, ChiShona, Manyika and Tshangaan. The radio station started off as a community radio initiative (CRI) under ZACRAS before being licensed

#### Sustainability Plan

In terms of sustainability VeMuganga is partnering with the local community, to provide material or financial donations. These are meant to improve the stations financial sustainability. As part of improving the stations sustainability, Vemuganga is also looking forward to advertising by the local community in light of legal changes announced through SI120 of 2023. However, the station does not currently have a documented sustainability plan.

#### Content

The station broadcasts from 0600hrs to 2100hrs. Its main programs are centered on promotion of Ndaou culture: these include Ndaou Cultural Baggage, Muchongoyo, Ndaou Poetry; Ndaou Taky; Mabhoyo Emubariraro. Its popular programs include Listeners request (music); Local Market Live Talk (business) and Mambo Vemuganga. A breakdown of the programming space is outlined below.



Music takes up 29% of the space, followed by news (20%), which is conducted in vernacular Ndaou language. The Ndaou leaning programming Ndaou Cultural Baggage takes up (17%) and it is followed by local business talk shows Live Market Talk (6%). Other programs take up 28% of the programming space. The broadcasts take place from 0600hrs to 2100hrs and the station representatives noted that they are not operating at full capacity yet.

## 4. Chimanimani FM

### Ownership



The station is owned by Chimanimani Community Radio Station Trust. Operations commenced on 8 July 2022v as a duly registered community radio. However, there is no history of Chimanimani FM as a community radio initiative

### Operational history

Chimanimani FM can be found at 100.0 on the FM dial. It is one of the community radio stations that were licensed in 2021, developed as part of the Zimbabwe Idai Recovery Project (ZIRP) coordinated by UNOPS and funded by the World Bank. The district of Chimanimani was one of the areas that were severely affected by Cyclone Idai, resulting in many fatalities. It is important for radio stations like Chimanimani FM to promote development and enhance disaster preparedness mechanisms instead of promoting hate and division. Chimanimani FM is covering Gwendingwe and Rusitu areas.

### Sustainability Plan

Chimanimani FM believes the legislation that prohibits advertising is a major impediment to community radio sustainability. However, in order to sustain its operations, Chimanimani FM is advertising for corporate clients on its Facebook page. Part of the income raised through online adverts and sponsored programs is used to pay staff and volunteer allowances to try and mitigate against low motivation. The respondents highlighted that advertising should be allowed to further sustain community radio stations. An ideal funding model should involve government support whereby government ministries and departments use community radio platforms for information dissemination at a fee. Over and above policy based allowance of community radio advertising, Chimanimani FM advocates for the government to enhance its support role by providing grants to community radio stations.

### Content

The station has continued to enhance access to information and serve the needs of listeners largely through educating, entertaining and informative programs. The station currently broadcasts in three languages namely Ndaou, Shona and English, with the community playing a deeper role in the content being churned out, towards disaster preparedness, agricultural markets, social issues and cultural heritage preservation.

The community's role in broadcasting content is through suggesting program ideas through a participatory feedback mechanism as well as being guests on some radio programs. For example, if it is a radio program discussing culture, the station approaches traditional leadership such as chiefs as guests.

Chimanimani FM currently has no editorial policy, but its focus is to educate, entertain and inform. The station has a Facebook page that has over 10 000 followers. The platform is used to share some of the content produced at the station.

## 5. Lotsha FM



### Ownership and control

Lotsha FM is owned by the Beitbridge Shashe Community Radio Broadcasting Trust. The station was established in December 2022, and officially launched on 18 February 2023.

### Operational History

Lotsha FM is a community radio station based in Beitbridge, Zimbabwe. It began broadcasting in February 2022 with a focus on providing news, music, and other programming for the local community. The station is owned and operated by a local

community organisation, with individual founding trustees

## Content

Lotsha broadcasts predominantly in Venda language, which is also spoken across the border in South Africa's Limpopo Province. In terms of content, Lotsha FM aims to provide a mix of local news and information, music from Zimbabwe and South Africa, and other programming that reflects the interests and concerns of the local community.

Five news categories are run by Lotsha FM. These include Local News, Business, Entertainment, Sports and Health. In terms of broadcasting content, the station slots include Music Mix (22:00–06:00hrs); Morning Cruise (06:00–10:00hrs); The Shift (Thsanduko) 10:00–14:00hrs); Afternoon Drive (14:00–18:00); Gavhelo 18:00–22:00.



## Radius covered by Lotsha FM

## Sustainability Plan

As for sustainability, the community radio station often relies on a mix of funding sources, including donations from listeners. It's unclear what specific plans Lotsha FM has in place to ensure its long-term sustainability. Possible partnerships were undertaken between the radio station and external players. For example at Lotsha FM, the station was benefiting from a combined skills training program with Musina FM, another community radio in South Africa. Musina and Beitbridge are neighboring border towns divided by the Limpopo River. The station was also exploring possible linkages with the Beitbridge business community to generate more revenue now that the law permits advertising.

## 6. Bayethe



## Ownership and Control

The station is owned by the Matobo Community Trust. Also known as The Voice from the Hills, the station was licensed as a way of protecting and preserving local cultural heritage in the Matobo area, which is inhabited by the Ndebele people. Bayethe officially commenced broadcasting on 6 June 2023. The founding Trustee is Zenzo Ncube and the Trust is chaired by Ndumiso Dube.

## Operations history

Bayethe is a social enterprise established in 2020 whose objective is running a community radio station broadcasting in the Matobo and Mangwe districts



of southern Zimbabwe. As a social enterprise, Bayethe's aims are building the community, and reinvesting monies back into the betterment and sustenance of the radio station, and therefore benefiting the community. Bayethe FM's ultimate goal is educating, informing and entertaining the community. Bayethe FM was licensed in 2021 by BAZ. The station is available on Twitter and Facebook with no regular updates about programming and has a musical slot online.

## Content

The station representative noted that the radius of coverage will shortly be increased to reach all licensed geographic areas up to Mangwe district after the installation of a more powerful transmitter and use of a 120m high tower at Maphisa. Bayethe relies on WhatsApp groups to generate points for discussion in the community. The station faces capacity challenges in terms of generating content because of limited resources to cover the whole district. However, the content is cultural and covers the activities of the people in Maphisa, including their traditions, knowledge systems, and how to combat climate change. Music, which is their largest program offering includes South African beats: amapiano, house, as well as rhumba and musical offerings from local artistes. There was no specific segmentation for local musical acts. The findings did not include media monitoring.

## Sustainability plan

The lack of proper infrastructure such as transmission towers and equipment makes it difficult for Bayethe FM to reach the community of Matobo. The station faced operational challenges due to the non-completion of the studio and capacity to carry out broadcasts due to transmission limitations. Bayethe FM relies on funding from donors and sponsors to run its operations. The limited funding makes it difficult for the radio station to invest in infrastructure and expand its reach to the audiences. In terms of sustainability, the station representative noted that they were appealing for and relying on donations in cash and kind to meet the needs of the station. Ncube highlighted that in the future they were earmarking another studio in Bulawayo to tap into the vast opportunities the metropolitan area offers.

## 7. Inqganga

### Ownership and control

Inqanga FM is based in Mbembesi and owned by the Mbembesi Development Trust. Efforts to gather responses from the station management were futile, hence reliance on desktop research. The station is owned by trust led by traditional leaders and operated through oversight by a board of directors. Political actors were also involved in the management of the station through the ruling party local structures. Inqganga is on air, but there is need to invest in infrastructure for the community radio station.

### Operational history

Mbembesi Development Trust, operating under the name Inqganga FM), was granted a license in 2021. The Mbembesi community in Matabeleland North views Inqganga FM as key in preserving their language, culture, and heritage, particularly for the predominantly Xhosa community. The station was licensed as a cultural preservation vehicle for the Xhosa language, one of the 16 official languages, and facing extinction due to cultural encroachment and generalisation of other main national languages. The station delayed going on air due to funding challenges, with the government stepping in to provide assistance with the studio.

## Content

The study found that the community was positively looking forward to having their voices heard through their languages and their community radio. According to the predominantly Xhosa community in Mbembesi, the licensed Inqganga FM is vital in preserving their language, culture and heritage. The Xhosa community is largely descendants of small groups of immigrants in the late 1890s. The station will help preserve the Xhosa language, which has been mixed with other languages, leading to a loss of heritage and history. The community believes that all languages are equal under the constitution and that the radio station's programs are developmental and will benefit the community. Thus the findings did not include media monitoring.

## Sustainability Issues

However, the community has been struggling to raise funds to purchase equipment for the radio station. The government offered to provide support to the community in purchasing the necessary equipment. The radio station is currently operating out of Fingo Hall, which is an old three room structure that has been used as livestock shelter before.

The hall upon completion of refurbishment will house the administration office, recording booth and studio. The station plans to venture into recording for local artists and generate income.

## 8. Madziwa



### Operational history

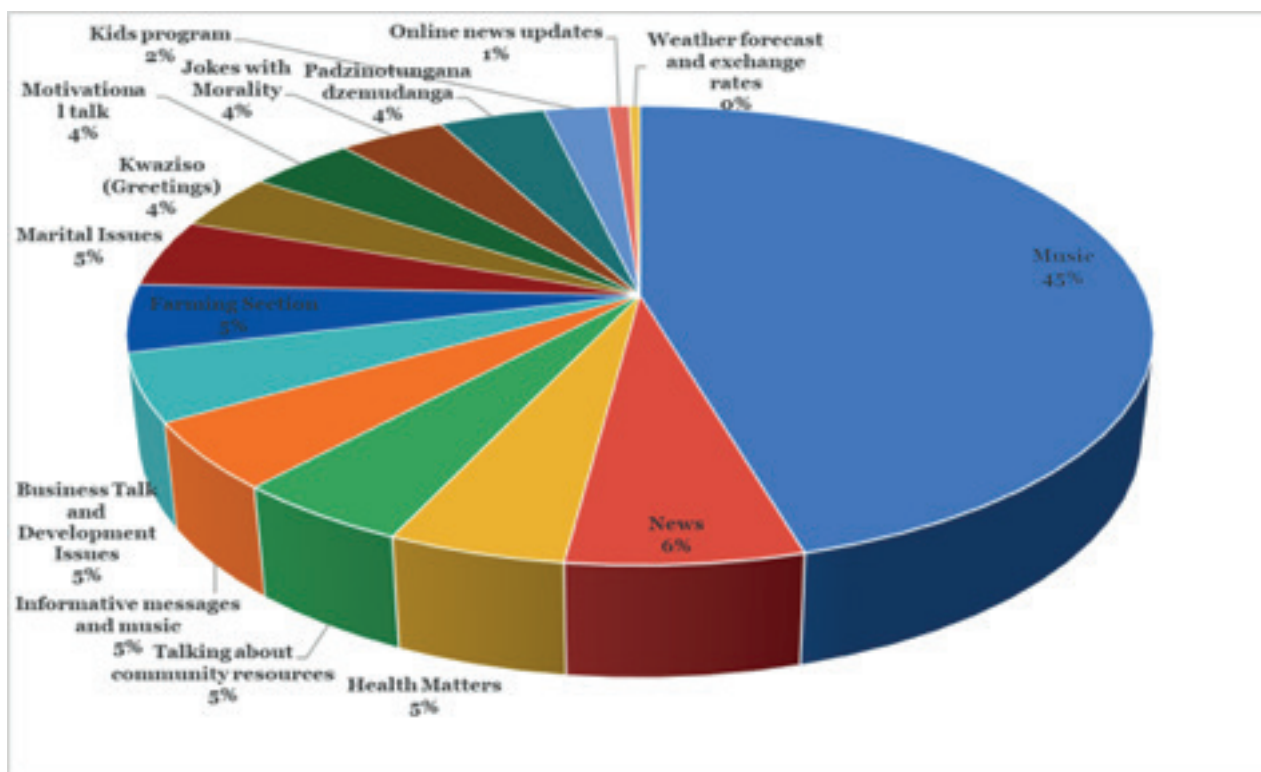
Madziwa FM commenced as a community radio initiative in Madziwa, Mashonaland Central Province, and 138 km north of the capital Harare. Madziwa is predominantly a farming and mining community which is dominated by the Korekore ethnic group. Madziwa was licensed in 2021 and commenced operations with an official launch on 20 April 2023.

### Ownership and control

The publicly accessed deed of Madziwa FM is owned by Madziwa Community Radio Trust. However, in response the community members said that the ownership of the station is something they do not understand as some of the trustees are resident in Harare and were placed purely for the purposes of facilitating the licensing. Members of the community also expressed concern that they do not have total control of the station's programming.

### Content

The majority of broadcast time on Madziwa FM is devoted to music (44%). News takes up 6% with talk shows on health, farming, business and development, marital issues, and community resources talking up 5% each. Marital issues, motivational talks, jokes with morality, and Padzinotungana Dzemudanga and Kwaziso (greetings) took up 4% each. Children's programming and online news updates as well as weather updates generated 1% each.



The media monitoring findings from the station were that content was mostly community based and focused, which is commendable. This included local programs, which used WhatsApp platforms for audience interaction and feedback. Some of the programs include the music which showcases local musical acts such as rising dancehall musicians, sungura bands and other genres, through complimentary broadcasting and posts on the station's Facebook page. Madziwa FM Community Radio has made a conscious decision to use the Korekore dialect, which is the language of the locals, over the more generalised Shona dialect. This decision has been praised by members of the community, who feel that the use of the Korekore dialect helps to preserve their cultural heritage and identity.

From a perspective of community power relations, the decision to use the Korekore dialect can be seen as a way for the local community to assert its power and agency. In many cases, local communities are marginalised and their voices are often not heard in mainstream media. By using the Korekore dialect, Madziwa FM Community Radio is giving a platform to the local community and allowing them to express themselves in their own language.

Additionally, the use of the Korekore dialect can be seen as a way of challenging the dominant power structures that exist in Zimbabwean society. The Shona dialect is widely used in Zimbabwe and is often associated with the country's political and economic elite. By using the Korekore dialect, Madziwa FM Community Radio is challenging the dominance of the Shona dialect and giving a voice to those who have been historically marginalised.

However, it is important to note that the use of the Korekore dialect may also have some limitations. For example, it may limit the reach of the radio station beyond the local community. Additionally, it may be difficult for non-Korekore speakers to understand the content produced by the station.

However, the content was limited in terms of its quality because of the high staff turnover as staff searched for greener pastures. This meant that there was constant retraining of staff and volunteers to replace the departing colleagues. In terms of generation of content, Madziwa FM was capacitated by learning sessions undertaken by BAZ as a technical partner. This included training for community volunteers, journalists and the station management committee as well as the board of trustees on the basics of broadcasting. As part of our research, we conducted interviews with the station's staff and held focus groups with members of the community to better understand the challenges faced by the radio station in generating content.

One of the main challenges faced by Madziwa FM Community Radio is the highly politicised nature of the community. The station is located in an area where political tensions run high, and this has made it difficult for the station to generate content that is not seen as favoring one political party over another. Members of the community have expressed concerns that the station's content is biased towards certain political parties, which has led to a lack of trust in the station's reporting.

Another challenge faced by Madziwa FM Community Radio is the limited resources available to the station. The station operates on a shoestring budget and relies heavily on volunteers to produce content. This has led to a lack of consistency in programming with some shows being cancelled due to a lack of resources. The station is struggling to establish partnerships with local organisations to produce content that is relevant to the community. Additionally, the station has started to incorporate more music into its programming to appeal to a wider audience.

## **Sustainability plan**

The station has a limited revenue base. The station manager highlighted that they were relying on minimal charges: they levy musicians conducting album launches, sponsored programs from non-governmental organisations and occasional payments by churches who provide programming content. However, as part of sustainability initiatives, the community station is open to receiving funding from the community through financial and material donations. The station is limited in terms of corporate funding because of the provisions in the SI 39 of 2020, which prohibits advertising for commercial purposes.

## 9. Twasumpuka



### Ownership and control

Twasumpuka FM is owned by the Twasumpuka Community Radio Station Trust. The station was officially licensed on 15 September 2021 and went on air officially on the 5th August 2023. The station is governed by board, which comprises the board chairperson, board treasurer, board secretary and two committee members, all elected by the community.

### Operational history

Before getting a broadcasting license the station used to disseminate information through WhatsApp platforms, Facebook, physical meetings, IEC materials like posters, fliers and stickers. The information formats included audio (radio programs), text (feature stories) and picture stories. The transmission radius of the station covers over 80 km in Binga district.

### Sustainability plan

Twasumbuka, as the interviews revealed, is faced with a number of challenges. These include limited funding, lack of access to technology, and government regulations. Despite these challenges, Twasumuka community radio station continues to play an important role in providing a platform for local communities to express themselves. In an effort to mitigate the challenges, ZACRAS donated a 3kVA solar system for the station to back up its recordings and minimise business. The station also does fundraising within the community. They also receive some sponsored programs for their radio features from the local CBOs.

### Content

The station broadcasts a range of programs that cater for the needs of the local community. These programs include news, current affairs, music, cultural programs, educational programs, and entertainment. The station also provides a platform for local artists to showcase their talent.

The news and current affairs programs cover local, national, and international news. The station has correspondents in different parts of the community, who provide updates on events happening in their areas. Music is an integral part of the station's programming. The station plays a variety of music genres, including traditional music such as the Ngoma Buntibe dance and music

The station broadcasts educational programs that cover a range of topics such as health, agriculture, and entrepreneurship. These programs are aimed at empowering the local community with information that can improve their livelihoods. The station also provides entertainment programs that cater for different age groups. These programs include dramas, comedies, and game shows based on Tonga culture.

## 10. Nyangani FM



### Ownership and control

Nyangani FM is owned by the Nyangani Community Radio Trust. The trust was established in 2019 and the station was licensed in 2021. It is a community radio station operating in Nyanga urban, a farming area in eastern Zimbabwe, bordering Mozambique with a radius of 150k or 37% of Manicaland. It was launched on the premise of representing the cultural rights of the Hwesa, who are the majority inhabitants of the area.

### Operational history

Nyangani FM was the second station to go on air on 13 May 2022. The station



was launched by the government through the Ministry of Information in partnership with UNESCO. It has a board of trustees, which handles the trust affairs on behalf of the different shareholders and stakeholders. A station manager heads the secretariat, who include the programming staff, journalists and volunteers. The makeup of the station is presented below:

Board of Trustees – 11 Members – (6 women 7 men)

Founder- Chief Morris Tangwena

Chairman – Fungai Chimwamurombe

Members – Admore Jokwiro; Willie Dhlandhlara, Ranga Nhungurira, Nhemias Gurajena, Florence Marondera, Fungai Chimwamurombe, Samson Mududza, Enisia Mareya, Ralph Takunda Maumisa, Richard Mandiwanzira, Moses Sachiwo, Chief Morris Tangwena

Secretariat – Station manager

Programs manager

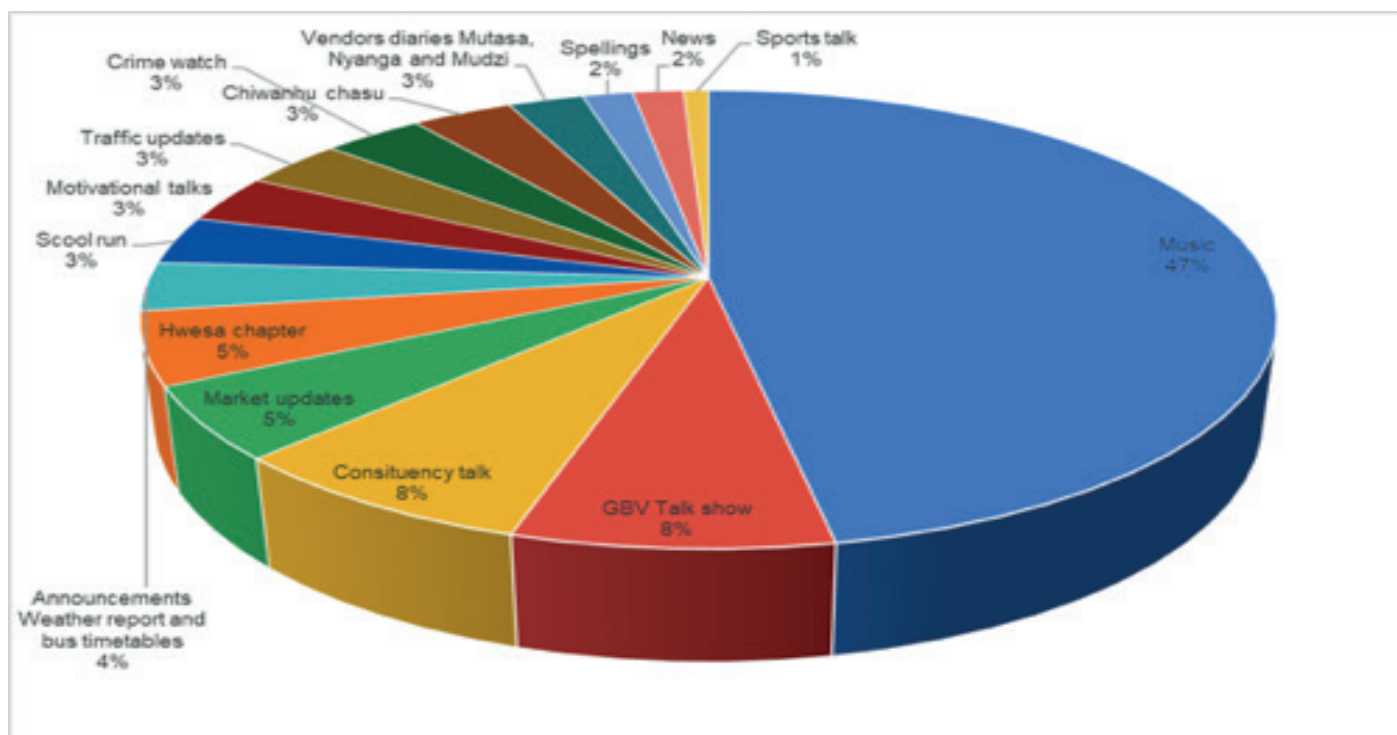
News and current affairs editor

Technician

## Content

The station programming caters for all age groups. Most of the station's content is generated from the community, who produce dramas, plays, music, discussion programs and news. In terms of news the station takes up a blended approach where news about Nyanga and Manicaland gets first priority before other events of national importance. News provided timely information on the ZONE and this has resulted in police officers manning an accident prone zone at the Richold turn-off. The current programming has assisted pupils with homework particularly CALA and information on culture. The community radio station played a critical role during natural disasters such as cyclones and provided the community with information on the disaster. However, in generating content, the station manager noted that there were threats to viability as most producers expected an income or revenue from their content. This placed the station in a dilemma because they were not viable or generating any revenue. Another emerging issue was that the content production presented a dilemma in terms of language use. Nyanga is primarily a Hwesa language area though over time it has come to be generalised as Manyika. As a result the station had challenges in terms of content, which is generated in Manyika or the generalised Zezuru, and in some instances English, yet they should speak to the Hwesa cultural group. Due to the lack of adequate content, the station faced challenges which forced the programming to take a six hour break. Broadcasting commences from 0500 hrs. to 2300 hrs. However in periods where there is poor electricity supply, the station is forced to cancel broadcasts and resort to kombi casting.

The research analysed the programming on a typical day at Nyangani FM.



Music accounted for 47% of programming time; followed by GBV Talk Show and constituency talk tied on 8%. Market Updates and business news as well as an ethno-pride cultural program Hwesa Chapter were on 5% each. School runs, traffic updates, motivational talks, crime watch and another talk show Crime Watch as well as Vendors Diaries covering Mutasa, Nyanga and Mudzi occupied 3% each of the space. Other programs accounted for the remaining time.

Below are the shows / radio programs that the community was aware of and listened to:

**Popular programs** – Dare re Varume, Stakeholders Engagement, PWD, Izwi Revarimi, GBV radio show,

**Dare ReVarume** – a program that targets men and discusses issues affecting men using Biblical values

**Sunday Morning Preaching**

**Mucheno** – the fashion show for young women and men

**Recipes** – Kudya Kunonaka

## Sustainability plan

The researchers noticed that the studio was well-equipped with audio mixers, microphones, lighting, and acoustics. The presenters demonstrated their broadcasting, news gathering, and current affairs production skills during broadcast sessions. Since its launch on April 18, 2022, Nyangani FM has made a significant impact on the community by offering employment opportunities for young radio presenters and attracting local businesses and entrepreneurs for sponsorships, ensuring financial sustainability.

However, there are sustainability issues the station faces, including lack of a definitive revenue. Nyangani FM faces several challenges that could impact its sustainability. One of the significant challenges is the cost of premises. The station operates in Nyanga, and they are using a house owned by the local Member of Parliament. This presents challenges on their operational and editorial independence.

Another challenge is the high staff turnover due to poor remuneration. The station has 16 presenters, but only nine are reporting to work and only one person is accredited by the Zimbabwe Media Commission (ZMC). The station has struggled to retain staff due to low salaries and limited employment benefits. This has resulted in a lack of consistency in programming and reduced quality of content. As a result there were challenges in capacity building, requiring assistance to train presenters and producers. The station loses transmission because of power challenges and their solar power battery is not strong enough

Furthermore, Nyangani FM has faced a lack of revenue, which could impact its ability to sustain operations. While the station has secured some sponsorships from local businesses and entrepreneurs, it still needs to explore additional revenue streams to ensure financial stability. As a measure to mitigate against financial sustainability challenges, the station has a WhatsApp group of Nyangani FM listeners termed Ambassadors, who pay US\$3 subscriptions every year.

## Recommendations for Nyangani

The station should increase programming on sports, have more experts on the HIV/programme

The station requested ZACRAS to assist them in acquiring a production studio that will assist with pre-recorded programs and editing.

Nyangani FM also requested for support in accreditation of the Nyangani FM team with ZMC.

As part of raising funds, it was suggested they use the background for cook out and for sessions for the musicians.

## 11. Lyeja FM



### Operational History

Lyeja FM, meaning sunrise, is owned by the Lyeja Development Trust. This is a non-governmental organisation which purports to represent the interests of the people in Hwange. LDT is run by a Board of Directors who are made up of representatives from the ethnic groups. Lyeja-Nyai Development Trust (LNDT) was granted a community radio broadcasting license for Lyeja FM 107.3 in March 2021. However, the radio station only began broadcasting in December 2022. LNDT is a local non-governmental

organisation that oversees Lyeja FM community radio in Hwange district. Hwange is a multilingual community in the Matabeleland North Province of Zimbabwe, comprising several ethnolinguistic groups, including the Nambya, Dombwe/Tonga, Chewa, Nyanja, Ndebele, and Lozi. The station currently broadcasts for an 8km radius due to the absence of transmitters from Transmedia.

## Ownership and control

Lyeja-Nyai Development Trust (LNDT) was registered on May 4, 2019, as a non-governmental and non-profit-making humanitarian organisation dedicated to improving the quality of life of the people of Hwange. However, LNDT's board of trustees is predominantly Nambya, which affects participation by other ethnic groups in Hwange. Lyeja FM aims to promote community development by broadcasting in indigenous languages, including Nambya, Dombwe, and Ndebele. However, Hwange has other minority languages, such as Chewa, Nyanja, and Lozi are not covered by Lyeja FM's broadcasting scope.

BAZ believed that community radio licensing was the only way to promote linguistic and cultural revitalisation in Zimbabwe. However, the licensing of community radio stations through local non-governmental organisations registered as trusts creates a complex situation. Although licensing has given minority language groups the opportunity to revive their indigenous languages, control by non-governmental organisations challenges the definition of community radio. Traditional leaders and self-interested players are the 'owners' of the NGO. The ownership of the station by an NGO is a threat to its objectivity as the directors of the trust tend to pursue self-interests, rather than inclusive approaches. The station's board of trustees highlighted that there was underhand interference in its operations by political actors. This was frustrating the station's efforts to partner with local businesses to support and sponsor programs. As a result there was rivalry with Hwange FM, an unsuccessful applicant for the same community broadcasting license. The station did not operate with an editorial policy and relied mostly on the laws governing community broadcasting.

## Content

In advocating for socially and politically marginalised or oppressed groups to have a fair share of resources and take control of their own lives, community radio stations play a crucial role. The political economy of indigenous language media is not exempt from media laws despite reflecting unique cultural experiences. Indigenous language media faces challenges related to resource allocation, power, and class functions, which are linked to the demographic size of indigenous ethnolinguistic groups. Typically, larger ethnic groups have better access to economic resources and power relations within the polity. Therefore, there is a correlation between the demographic size of an ethnolinguistic group and its economic potential. Economic power is determined by income levels and cultural assertiveness of an ethnolinguistic group.

The board member Casper Ndovu highlighted that the station was facing funding challenges... As a result the station operations in news gathering were facing challenges and were limited. They highlighted that the content they generate for news was not available because they do not have relevant equipment such as recorders. , the station staff was yet to be accredited by the ZMC which was a barrier to their authenticity and identification in the field.

Local representation by non-governmental organisations poses challenges for community radio broadcasting, particularly in multilingual communities where one ethnolinguistic group may exercise a monopoly over another. In the case of Lyeja FM, Nambya receives more coverage, followed by Dombwe and Ndebele. However, Hwange has other languages, such as Nyanja and Lozi, which are not covered by Lyeja FM's broadcasting scope. Ethnic differences in Hwange hinder equal community participation as some ethnic groups such as Nambya claim to be more local and original inhabitants of the area than the Chewa.

Members of the community highlighted that the station was relevant to the community. Interest groups such as musicians and artists reported that they had a local focused platform for their music. The station was playing local music and other music from musicians in the province. In terms of programming, the station's programs were impacting the community in terms of access to information using ethnic languages. A respondent from the community said that the station's use of Nambya, Dombwe, Nyanja, and Chewa languages gave them diversity in terms of participation. Station staff said that while the station provided a platform for community participation, there was a general lack of understanding of what a community radio station is in the community. Business people and the church viewed the station as a commercial entity and were demanding payment from the station for engagements, when it is supposed to be the other way round.

The members of the community emphasised that the station was a provider of information and was benefiting from the radio restriction faced by Breeze FM in Victoria Falls, as it was restricted to the Mateta area. For Lyeja FM, the station executive producer said that they were broadcasting in an 8km radius. They highlighted that there was bureaucracy involving Transmedia and Net One, which was delaying the installation of the station's transmitters.

## Sustainability Plan

In the early stages of community radio licensing, local non-governmental organisations requested financial support to address socio-economic challenges in their regions. BAZ donated studio equipment to community radio stations. In August 2022, Lyeja FM's station manager, Munyandi, noted that once the government provides broadcasting equipment, it will be easy to start broadcasting. The Trust has set up a management team to oversee day-to-day operations of the station. However, it is important to consider the political implications of donor funding, especially from the government, when analysing the media's political economy.

The station representatives highlighted that there was lack of appreciation for the station by the business community in the area. In contrast, community representatives from villages in Lukosi added that they were appreciative of the station and were actually being frustrated by the station's limited reach. The station staff highlighted that as volunteers they did not receive specialized training to navigate broadcasting dynamics and they did not have knowledge of the broadcasting laws. The station did not suffer challenges such as power cuts because Hwange is the centre of electricity production. In terms of capacity, the station staff highlighted that they were not able to generate content, beyond what they generate conventionally. Hence there is a need to come up with innovative ways to broadcast outside of FM. This includes voice notes from the station WhatsApp group, which can be integrated into a podcast and disseminated far and wide.

The station highlighted that there was no sustainability plan at the moment. This was caused by lack of financial investment. The station was not generating revenue at the time of writing the report, though the government had amended the Broadcasting Services Act to allow for advertising by local business entities. The board of trustees was concerned by the lack of business buy-in into the project and the bureaucracy associated with decision making by local business entities to sponsor programs and partner the station.

The board of trustees highlighted that there was a plan to construct a recording studio to cater for local artistes at a nominal fee. This would increase revenue generation for the station. Currently the station was broadcasting from a yet to be completed structure, with renovations at different stages of completion. Thus they needed support from stakeholders to complete the building's roof, flooring and security.

## 12. Avuxeni FM



### Ownership and control

A community Trust (Chiredzi Rural Communities Development Initiative Trust) that was established in 2019 owns Avuxeni FM. The name of the station is derived from Xitsonga meaning "greetings". The board is made up of 14 individuals. However, the current board was ushered in mainly for the purposes of the application process. The tenure of office is close to expiry and the station is due to elect a new board at an Annual General Council meeting.

The governance structure of Avuxeni FM is made up of the General Council at the top followed by the Board. The Secretariat is headed by a station coordinator and is divided into five departments, namely finance and administration, community liaison and

branding, Production and programming and monitoring and evaluation.

### Operations History

Avuxeni FM was licensed in March 2021, started broadcasting in November 2021 and was eventually launched in March 2022. The radius of the Avuxeni is estimated to be 200km. However, there has been an issue that someone from places like Chimanimani, Bunker, Gwanda are able to listen to Avuxeni within the station's allocated frequencies. This has led them to say for one to listen to their broadcast it will depend on their terrain as the terrain must have encroached but

some nearby places are unable to connect e.g. Rutenga and Mwenezi.

## Content

Community ownership of the station is mirrored through board representation and content contributions from the community. The station is in the process of finalising the setting up of "Radio Listenership Clubs" within the community. The mandate of these clubs is to enhance listenership of the station and to promote commitment of the community to the station through membership subscriptions. The key editorial focus of the station is to promote the Xitsonga and Shangaan languages and culture. The participants acknowledged the role played by the station in ensuring that the original language and culture is preserved. An elderly woman in attendance bemoaned the erosion of the original language and culture due to many people migrating into Chiredzi in the past decades. A young male participant further acknowledged the role played by the station as he is now interfacing with words and cultural practices that he was previously not accustomed to.

## Sustainability plan

Key challenges faced by the station during the application process was lack of cooperation at community level, particularly competing stations that were also vying for the same license. These included Radio Tsakani who is a ZACRAS member. Since the start of broadcasting, the station has faced a number of sustainability challenges, which include long hours, and days of dead air (no broadcasting) due to prolonged power cuts. The station currently has no power back up system and is appealing to well-wishers for donations.

For the day-to-day operations, the station also faces financial challenges that make it difficult to motivate or incentivise volunteers. There is a high volunteer turnover due to lack of financial motivation.

The station is also failing to serve two of its allotted areas due to low signal strength. However, there has been feedback from as far as Gutu and Masvingo from listeners who somewhat have access to the station but using a different frequency channel. The station's reporters are also facing challenges of sourcing content from official authoritative sources due to non-accreditation as none of the reporters is currently accredited with the ZMC.

As Avuxeni community radio station stands today, their funds come from donations. Most of these donations were said to be coming from the community members, which includes chiefs from their surrounding communities. Other funds are being catered for through sponsored programs, which they are broadcasting like advertising businesses that are within their community. Members of clubs, which pay membership fees were also brought out as the discussion commenced.

## Recommendations for Avuxeni

There is a need for a policy that allows the government to provide monthly or quarterly grants to community radio stations to financially cushion them against the harsh economic conditions.

There was a need for resource mobilisation from the community and local government funding projects to be done with the interest to increase funds to sustain their station.

Another suggestion was for them to conduct awareness programs to the community so that they know what the station is in need of or even educating them on how the station operates

## 13. Radio Bukalanga

### Ownership and control



Radio Bukalanga is a licensed non-profit community radio station. It is an initiative started by members of the Bukalanga community in Bulilima and Mangwe districts in Matabeleland South. The station is committed to the full participation of the Bukalanga community in Plumtree, Bulilima, and Mangwe districts in Matabeleland South of Zimbabwe, bordering Botswana. The station management were not forthcoming when their input was sought for the interviews. As a result the section was populated by desktop literature review.



## Operations History

Radio Bukalanga is the first-ever community radio station for BaKalanga to broadcast in Kalanga, one of the constitutionally recognised official languages in Zimbabwe. The radio station exists primarily to serve the BaKalanga community and to ensure that community voices are amplified. It engages with the local community to provide historical, social, educational, cultural, informative, and entertaining content that inspires and connects the community as a whole. Currently the station uses Facebook and WhatsApp groups to reach out to audiences in Plumtree, Ndolwane and Empandeni. On WhatsApp, the station is more vibrant, with audiences locally and mostly South Africa who access local news and share information.

## Content

The station has a WhatsApp group where all communication and discussions is audio based. The group also includes people in the diaspora. They said they use the audio discussions to inform their programming, which is based on historical, social, educational, cultural, informative, and entertainment content. It serves as a platform for strengthening community and stakeholder participation in social development. The station seeks to provide relevant and popular content that meets the expectations of its stakeholders and consumers. However, at the time of finalising report writing, the station was still setting up and yet to officially broadcast. Thus the findings did not include media monitoring.

## Sustainability Plan

Radio Bukalanga is committed to ensuring its own sustainability. According to its application at BAZ, the station does not have profit as one of its strategic objectives. Instead, the radio station will work tirelessly to ensure its own sustainability by providing relevant and popular content that meets the expectations of its stakeholders and consumers as well as serve as an anchor for community development.

## 14. Kasambabezi FM



### Ownership and Control

Kasambabezi FM is a non-profit community radio station that is owned and operated by the Kasambabezi Community Radio Trust. It is located in the Kariba district of Zimbabwe and serves the Shona and Tonga-speaking community in the area. The station is yet to start operating from Siakobvu. Currently the station is using the Patsaka Premises and equipment that was donated more than eight years ago.

### Operations history

Kasambabezi FM was established in 2012 with the aim of providing a platform for the Tonga-speaking community to share information and ideas. The station was founded by a group of community members who were passionate about promoting local development through access to information. Since its establishment, Kasambabezi FM has become an integral part of the community it serves, providing a platform for local voices and issues to be heard. In the lead up to the licensing there were disputes between the Shona and Tonga ethnic groups, which resulted in the name of the initiative Patsaka Nyaminyami in Shona being changed to Kasambabezi FM in Tonga. The station relies mostly on Facebook and WhatsApp for reach to 27000 members of the community. The station covers 40-80km including Hurungwe district.

### Content

The station uses English language mostly and a mix of Tonga and Shona, which was attributed to the challenges of setting up. Kasambabezi FM provides a wide range of programming, including news, current affairs, music, sports, and cultural programs. The station's programming is designed to promote the Tonga language and culture, as well as to provide information and entertainment that is relevant to the community. The content was subject to a contest between the Shona speaking people of Kariva (as Kariba is known) and the Tonga speaking inhabitants of the area.

However, most of the station's content is in Tonga as reflected by the name, Kasambabezi.

The most popular programs with impact include

Tsika ne Magariro is very popular, there is also community ownership

Human and wildlife Conflict issues which been an update programme on informing residents of the dangers and how to live with animals

#### Service Delivery Programme

Municipality Talk – Local Authority Update

Pastors programme every Sunday that is a church service

The content is also generated from friends of KFM a WhatsApp group for locals and those living abroad

### **Sustainability plan**

Kasambabezi FM is faced with several challenges, which include lack of financial support. The station has talented presenters, who are well versed with radio operations but they are not able to sustain their allowances. In addition, the station only has one laptop which slows down the different operations across departments. Additionally, there is no visibility for the stations such as signage and branding to raise awareness of the station's presence in the community. However, Kasambabezi FM is committed to ensuring its own sustainability. The station relies on funding from donations, grants, and sponsorships to cover its operational costs. It also generates revenue through advertising and sponsorships. To ensure its long-term sustainability, Kasambabezi FM has developed a strategic plan that focuses on increasing its listenership, diversifying its revenue streams, and improving its programming. The station manager highlighted that there was a need to follow up on sustainability such as a fishing license, and tapping into the corporate social responsibility (CSR) activity of local companies such as Padenga, Lake Harvest and hospitality players in the area.

### **Recommendations for KFM**

There is need for full radio programs in Tonga and anchored by a Tonga speaking presenter

KFM should have a news bulletin as part of the programming and increase programming on sports tapping into the presence of a local football team

The station should organise training of citizen journalists and issue certificates

The station secretariat should carry out radio shows to increase awareness of the station and for community mobilisation

A woman with braided hair and glasses, wearing a white suit, is pointing with a yellow pencil at a presentation board. The board displays various charts, including a pie chart and a bar chart. The background is a blurred office setting with large windows. A green semi-transparent banner is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the text.

## Conclusion, Summary and Recommendations

# Conclusion, Summary And Recommendations

## Introduction

Community broadcasting plays a crucial role in promoting democratic participation, cultural diversity, and social inclusion. However, in Zimbabwe, the political economy of community broadcasting has been challenging due to various factors, including government regulations, lack of funding, and limited access to technology. This chapter provides a set of recommendations for the practice of community broadcasting in Zimbabwe.

## Summary of key findings

### Implications of the current scenario

The current scenario in Zimbabwe presents several challenges for community broadcasting. The Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe (BAZ) has strict regulations that limit access to broadcasting licenses, making it difficult for community broadcasters to operate. Additionally, the Zimbabwe Media Commission (ZMC) has limited resources to monitor and regulate the media industry effectively. The lack of funding and limited access to technology also make it challenging for community broadcasters to produce quality content and reach their target audiences.

### Way Forward

To improve the practice of community broadcasting in Zimbabwe, several measures need to be taken. Firstly, the government needs to review its regulations and policies to make it easier for community broadcasters to obtain licenses and operate. Secondly, there is a need for increased funding and support for community broadcasters to produce quality content and reach their target audiences. Thirdly, there is a need for increased access to technology and training for community broadcasters to improve their skills and knowledge.

## Recommendations

### Ministry of Information

The Ministry of Information should review its policies and regulations to make it easier for community broadcasters to obtain licenses and operate.

The ministry should also provide funding and support for community broadcasters.

Government should not politicise community radio stations licensing and broadcasting operations through ownership and board make up

### Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe

BAZ should simplify the licensing process for community broadcasters and provide support for capacity building initiatives.

BAZ should also encourage the participation of marginalised communities in the broadcasting sector.

BAZ should improve infrastructure and resources, increase network coverage and frequency, and allow for independent and unbiased information flow.

### Zimbabwe Media Commission

ZMC should increase its resources to monitor and regulate the media industry effectively.

ZMC should also provide training and support for community broadcasters.

### Civic society

Civic society organisations should advocate for policies and regulations that promote the practice of community broadcasting. They should also provide funding and support for community broadcasters.

### Media support organisations

Media support organisations should provide training and support for community broadcasters to improve their skills and knowledge. They should also provide funding and technical assistance for capacity building initiatives.

### Communities

Communities should participate actively in the practice of community broadcasting by supporting local broadcasters and providing feedback on their content. Communities should also advocate for policies that promote the practice of community broadcasting.

More community involvement and participation, especially in rural areas, and to support local talent and cultural events.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the practice of community broadcasting in Zimbabwe faces several challenges that require urgent attention. The recommendations provided in this chapter can help improve the practice of community broadcasting in Zimbabwe by promoting democratic participation, cultural diversity, and social inclusion.





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