



Re-thinking the workings of community radios: how community is a community radio in Uganda



A study by the Unwanted Witness Uganda

With support from



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ABBREVIATIONS

BAAP	Buenos Aires Action Plan
CBOs	Community Based Organization
CMC	Community Multimedia Centre
COL	Commonwealth of Learning
COMNETU	Community Media Network Uganda
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
FOKUS	Forum for Women and Development
HBRCR	Homa Bay Community Radio
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IDRC	International Development Research Center
IDRC	International Development Research Center
ITU	International Telecommunications Union
KKCR	Kagadi Kibaale Community Radio
NGOs	Non Governmental Organizations
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
SIDA	Swedish International development Agency
UCC	Uganda Communication Commission
UDS	Uganda Development Service
UMWA	Uganda Media Women's Association
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
URDT	Uganda Rural Development Training

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The media in Uganda was owned and controlled by the state until the liberalization of the economy in 1990s. The liberation saw the establishment of privately owned media houses that opened up for business. The liberalized radios provided alternative platforms and voices to especially hard to reach areas focusing originally on issues that affect the communities to which they serve. Through the media and especially radio, the communities were able to bring out their views which would reach those in leadership positions and the communities would receive in good measure feedback through the same medium of information exchange.

Radio has been noted to be the most common means of communication and information dissemination, the sending and receiving of information from leaders to people has been facilitated easily by radios. This has too enabled and empowered them through access to information over radios. Unfortunately many of the largely established radios in Uganda have a limited frequency that does not cover the entire country. This thus leaves many communities not served by the said radios. To bridge this gap, many non-state actors established community based audio media to relay information to particular communities based on linguistic, or ethnicity. These have positioned themselves as community ears and mouth pieces. The community radios do not only provide the communities they serve with timely information and news; they too have facilitated development in the said communities.

Community radios are currently experiencing various capacity gaps especially in utilizing various Information Communication Technology tools and financial constraining. Hence this has limited their niche and relevance. While many are using community based content in their programming, they are influenced heavily by the commercial radios in operating. Added to the above community radios have experienced

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political control and patronage which has stood as a stooge in their development and purpose. Coupled to the above they are subjected to the rigorous and unfavorable legal and policy framework as that of the commercial radios hence limiting their anticipated service through regulatory control.

The study aimed at establishing a deeper understanding on how community are community radios; analyzing the legal environment, use of technology; ownership; and source of funding for community radios in post conflict areas. It mapped the environment and proposed recommendations for action that is expected to facilitate the growth of community radios.

1.0 THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNITY RADIOS

Community radio emerged in East Africa in 1982 in Kenya with the establishment of Homa Bay Community Radio (HBRCR).¹ There has been an attempt to explain a community radio, some scholars have referred to community radios as techniques and technologies for responding to community communication needs.² While others like Wanyeki, have regarded community media as technologies which marginalized groups are enabled to participate in issues of development, politics and cultural preservation³. Karikari regard

The research analysis on community radios sought to understand the extent of how community radios are community and to what extent they have embraced various Information Communication Technology (ICT) tools in operations. Bearing in mind that radio has been known as the number one medium of communication between leaders and the citizens and also doubles as the fastest means of information dissemination including reaching the widest coverage, its impact on community development is yet to be fully under scored.

For a long time the media in Uganda was controlled and owned by the state until the early 1990 when the liberalization of the economy took root. This saw the growth of many private owned media houses including radio from the national level to the community level. The grass root percolation of community radios has supported the community to participate in the democratic process of Uganda as a country, during the talk shows the communities are able to call and task their leaders to explain on how the leaders intend to carry out their manifestos among others.

1 www.academia.edu/7369912/community_Radio_in_East_Africa._For_or_by_the_community Kennedy Javunura 2011:03 edited by Janey Gordon

2 Ibid quoting Opubor 2000:16

3 Ibid quoting Wany

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Noting that democratic governance is about an established relationship between the state and the citizens, a basic requirement for such a relationship is an informed citizenry which relies on radio in their communities for communication and news. Through the media, citizens are informed of their leader's actions and performance especially when media practitioners use the access to information law in acquiring information which is then relied to the communities through community radio programs. This facilitates the formulation of opinions and tickles public debates as to whether the leaders are acting for the interests of the citizens, carrying community voices and demanding action on issues of concern to the community. Through such interactions, the media/ radio in the community are facilitating accountability and good governance.

While it is widely acknowledged that the best way to deliver information to people and empower them is through radios.⁴ Unfortunately many of the largely established radios in Uganda have a limited frequency that does not cover the entire country.

This thus leaves many communities not served by the community radios. To bridge this gap, many non-state actors established community based audio media to re-lay information to particular communities based on linguistic, or ethnicity.

A number of organizations both formal and informal such as Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Community Based Organizations (CBOs), religious and cultural institutions own and run various radios at community level that aim at keeping the citizenry informed in their operating communities. Many provide radio services in the various native languages to meet the information needs of communities. While there are a number of them started and run by politicians as a political tool to stay in touch with the people/ communities they represent access to such platforms/ radios by

4 In East Africa, as many parts of the 'Global South', radio is the dominant mass media Kennedy Javuru quoting Bourgault, 1995:68-102: AMDI, 2006

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persons of different political inclination is often limited and the station on many occasions undertakes self-censorship. Many of these community based radios are informal providing open air broadcasts while a few are registered and are provided with a broad spectrum/ frequency closed at a particular geographical area which the study understood that limited their services to a given rural community/ locality with communication done in particular linguistic, or ethnicity.

Noting that over the years, technology has greatly developed, it looks to be determined to what extent have community based radios embraced the new media technology especially the new age media platforms and making them accessible to the communities they serve. In many urban centers, the existence of internet has created a new wave of citizen journalism that feeds and informs the various media houses/ agencies on the various happenings. This is however not matched with rural communities due to the limited access to internet and thus new technology, its argued that if such community radios utilized the new ICT mediums, they would have the ability to expand not only their geographical reach but also listenership; including staying in touch with families that have migrated or with relatives away from the locality.

This has been reasoned on the basis that many community radio practitioners have no knowledge of the new media technologies and thus are not able to keep with the pace. Many of the community radio presenters, owners and listeners lack the capacity to utilize the new media technology. This coupled with the lack of resources to upgrade; the necessary expertise to utilize the technology has left many communities unable to access timely information and news hence failure to meet the informational needs of the community they serve.

The study was hinged on a number of objectives main of which was establishing a deeper understanding on how community are community radios; study the legal environment, use of technology; ownership; and source of funding for community radios in post conflict areas

2.0 HOW COMMUNITIES ARE COMMUNITY RADIO STATIONS IN UGANDA

As of 2012, 286 radios and 70 television stations were licensed⁵, Uganda's airwaves could be described as one of the most liberalized in Africa. Compared to Uganda's seven community radio stations, South Africa boasts of over 100 community stations,⁶ Mali 300, Mozambique 57, Ethiopia 16,⁷ and Kenya 10.⁸ The rhetoric that should linger in our minds is why Uganda attracts more commercial and less community radio stations today and how should a community radio work. Thus different writers have attempted to explain the concept of how community should be community radio stations by the following; "They should be primarily for the good of the members of the public or of particular communities in order to deliver social gain, rather than primarily for commercial reasons or for the financial or other material gain of the individuals providing the service, they should primarily serve one or more communities, they should offer members of the target community opportunities to participate in the operation and management of the service, within the geographical area of the targeted community, there must be community ownership and accountable to the target community."⁹

5. Uganda Communications Commission (2012) Annual Post, Broadcasting and Telecommunications Market Review (2011/2012) [The statistics were recorded in June 2012]

6. National Community Radio Forum –NCRF (2014) 20th Anniversary Report (<http://www.ncrf.org.za>)

7. UNESCO (2013) Turning into Development: International Comparative Survey of Community Radio Regulation (http://www.law-democracy.org/live/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/CR-Report.final_.English.pdf)

8. Community Radio Association of Kenya (2013) (<http://crak.co.ke/index.php/component/content/article/8-about-us/6-charter1>)

9. Ofcom notes of guidance for community radio license applicant and licensee, Publication date: May 2010 (Revised from version published in August 2006) pg 5

2.1 Ownership and management

A number of radio stations in Uganda, especially upcountry, tend to describe themselves as community. Noting the above criteria, only seven radio stations have the character of a real community radio station.

2.1.1 Kagadi Kibaale Community Radio (KKCR) 91.3 FM

The station was launched in 2002 by Uganda Rural Development Training (URDT). The radio is part of a large training initiative comprising a residential girls' school; demonstration farm teaching students and community members sustainable agricultural techniques; a vocational institute training local youth in leadership, business, and vocational skills; an all-women's university (African Rural University).

Through information-sharing the station supplements URDT's efforts to achieve its mission to promote integrated rural development, by helping communities attain better health, education, financial self-sufficiency, civic participation, and human/gender rights in an interconnected approach.

2.1.2 101.7 Mama fm

The Kampala-based station was started in 2001 by the Uganda Media Women Association (UMWA) and targets mostly women aged between 15-45 and the general public in a radius of 400km with gender-sensitive content. Community participation is achieved through networking with groups, NGOs and schools and broadcasting in English and a range of local languages.¹⁰It has the highest reach among community stations reaching over a million listeners in central and eastern Uganda

10 www.umwamamafm.co.ug/

2.1.3 Nakaseke 102.9 fm

The station was started by Nakaseke Community Multimedia Centre (CMC). It is part of three telecentre projects in Uganda established with the support of UNESCO, International Development Research Center (IDRC), International Telecommunications Union (ITU), the British Council, and Nakaseke Kasangombe sub-counties. It is located 65km north of the capital city, Kampala. It was started as a pilot project by the Uganda National Commission for UNESCO to complement the wider efforts conceived under the Buenos Aires Action Plan (BAAP) Programme No.9 whose goal is to “improve access to telecommunications in rural and remote areas as well as in deprived urban areas by developing the necessary telecommunication infrastructure.”¹¹ The stations helped reach out to more people than 10,000 community inhabitants initially planned for the telecentres.

2.1.4 Radio Buwama 103.3 fm

This radio was started in 2004 by Buwama Community Multimedia Centre (CMC) a telecentre initiative under the support of UNESCO and IDRC to provide information to the communities in Buwama sub-county of Mpigi District and its surroundings. Like the other two stations under this UNESCO initiative, it relies on volunteer staff to produce and broadcast programmes.

2.1.5 102.5 Tiger fm Nabweru CMC

Tiger FM is part of the Nabweru Community Multimedia Centre (CMC), a telecentre also established under the UNESCO initiative. It covers a radius of 20km in Wakiso district. Like Nakaseke and Buwama stations,

11. International Telecommunications Union (2001) Buenos Aires Action Plan; Programme 9 : Integrated Rural Development http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/univ_access/BAAP09.html

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radio presenters use the telecentre ICT facilities such as the internet and library to source for information on health, agriculture among others which they broadcast

2.1.6 Radio Apac 92.9 fm

This radio went on air in 1999 under the wings of Radio Apac Limited, a registered company limited by guarantee using equipment donated by the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) to the people of Apac in northern Uganda. Being a registered company limited by guarantee, it is non-profit making, thus meeting the criteria of a community station. Being the first radio station in Apac, its stated mission is to use community participation and air content aimed at improving the livelihoods of people here. In addition to the radio broadcast services, the office in Apac provides telephone and fax services, video recording and editing, audio recording and editing, and internet access to nearby communities.,

2.1.7 106.5 Shine fm Oyam

The station in Oyam district is also owned by Radio Apac Limited.

Except for Mama fm which serves a community of interests (women); the other six community stations serve geographical areas. The above stations also fall into three ownership and management categories; two founded and managed by a Non-Government Organisation and a professional association (KKCR FM and Mama FM); three founded with the support of UNESCO and managed jointly by the community made up of local sub-county authorities and the various local groups (Nakaseke FM, Nabweru FM, and Buwama FM); and two founded by a registered company limited by guarantee (Radio Apac and Shine FM Oyam).

Nakaseke, Buwama and Nabweru CMC radio stations are controlled and managed by committees of representatives from the diverse interest

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groups in their respective communities. Considering the diminished role of UNESCO, the three CMCs might have to reconstitute themselves into Community Based Organisations (CBOs) to offer effective control and management of the radio stations on behalf of the communities. The state of flux in control and management make them prone to external or political interference.

All the above radio stations are distinguished by being non-profit making with boards and governing committees which to a large extent reflect the diversities of the communities they operate in. The only distinction is that while other stations use radio to supplement their development work in the communities, Radio Apac and Shine fm Oyam rely solely on the radio stations to bring about socio-economic change in the communities they serve.

2.2 Operating legal and policy framework

Community broadcasting is recognized by the National Broadcasting Policy. According to the policy, community broadcasting “is for, by and about specific geographical communities or communities of interest, whose ownership and management is representative of those communities, which pursues a social development agenda and which is not-for-profit.” In addition to the declaration of principle to uphold a three-tier system for broadcasting: public service, commercial and community; the policy states substantive objectives which seek to promote community broadcasting in the country.¹²

The definition and policy objectives are in tandem with international best practice on community broadcasting contained in among others the African Charter on Broadcasting.¹³ These objectives seek to provide citizens with a platform to articulate their local issues; provide more

12 GoU (2006) *The National Broadcasting* (p39-40)

13 African Charter on Broadcasting in Africa (2001) (p19-20)

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opportunities for programming in the indigenous Ugandan languages; provide indigenous programmes relevant to development at the grassroots; reduce the gap between urban and rural communities in accessing information for development; encourage members of the community to participate in the planning, production and presentation of programmes; and promote ownership of media by low income groups of society i.e. the poor and vulnerable.

To achieve these objectives, government committed itself to: ensure that the necessary legal framework is in place to ensure that community broadcasting promotes co-existence, communication and good governance; provides technical and other support for its establishment and operation; and to ensure that community broadcasting promotes human rights. It also commits itself to ensure that the regulator of airwaves fosters the growth of community broadcasting in the country.

2.3 Good policy, bad practice

The broadcasting policy commits the regulator – Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) – to avail both geographical and interest-based community broadcasting licenses. However, the Uganda Communications Commission Act 2013 does not recognize the distinct characteristics of community broadcasting and instead subjects it to the same licensing regime and requirements set for commercial broadcasting.

The license fee decreases with the distance from the capital city, Kampala. Stations within the 100km range pay UGX 3,000,000 annual licensing fees compared to those in 300km range which pay UGX 1,500,000. From the surface, it would appear to favor community radio stations which are presumed to be in the countryside.

Community radio stations, however, are not exclusively located in rural areas. Mama FM, for example, is located right in Kampala and so has

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to pay the same license fees like other commercial stations in this geographical area.

The Uganda Communications Act 2013 ought to recognize the distinct characteristics of community broadcasting by waiving or having a nominal licensing fee to attract and sustain community stations run by poorly resourced communities.¹⁴

In addition to the criteria of distance from Kampala, the regulator needs to introduce another criteria based on the three-tier system charging community stations less licensing fees lower than those set for commercial broadcasters. This would be a way of evolving an enabling environment for community media.¹⁵ “Given; its potential to broaden access by poor and rural communities to the airwaves.”¹⁶

2.4 Financing constraints and sustainability

All community radio stations in Uganda were established with external donor support. Rural communities can hardly afford to pull funds together to start a radio station. The KKCR got support from Swedish International development Agency (SIDA); Nakaseke, Buwama and Nabweru were funded by UNESCO, IDRC, British Council; Radio Apac started with equipment donated by the Commonwealth of Learning; and Maama fm with initial funding from Norway’s Forum for Women and Development (FOKUS),

14 Buckley S. (2008) Community broadcasting: good practice in policy, law and regulation (Steve Buckley, President World Association for Community Radio Broadcasters. Paper prepared for UNESCO for World Press Freedom Day 2008)

15. GoU (2006) The National Broadcasting : “The regulator shall: Create an enabling environment for the establishment of community media” (p39)

16. Buckley, S. (2008) Community broadcasting: good practice in policy, law and regulation (Steve Buckley, President World Association for Community Radio Broadcasters. Paper prepared for UNESCO for World Press Freedom Day 2008)

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and Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD and the Uganda Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but after the pilot phases, the majority of community stations have had to sustain themselves.

Community radio stations are registered non-profit making entities. In some countries they are distinguished from mainstream commercial broadcasting by not carrying adverts or sponsored programmes. However, the Uganda Communications Commission has not used this to exclude them from running or collecting advertising, or from sponsorship revenue to supplement their poor resource base. Notwithstanding the fact that running advert by a community radio affects the elements of it, the practice of allowing these radio run advert for revenue could be maintained because of the ability to enable the radios raise revenue.

In addition to reliance on donor financing in the initial stages, all the community stations carry advertisements and charge a nominal fee from community members for running content on the station.¹⁷ Nakaseke and Kasangombe sub-counties had initially introduced Shs1,000 for every graduated tax payer to finance the Nakaseke Community radio. The radio levy ended when government scrapped the graduated tax in 2006 yet advertising revenue is still insufficient to sustain community stations to enable them meet programming obligations to their communities.

Nakaseke, Nabweru and Buwama stations are often forced to go off air for lack of funds to fuel generators during electricity outages. Shortage of funds has also led to a high turnover of volunteer broadcasters. After benefiting from training, some opt to join better paying commercial stations. This was a comment from almost all the persons that participated in the study.

17. Semujju, B. (2013) Participatory media for a non-participatory community: Western media for Southern communities. In International Communication Gazette published online: Sage <http://gaz.sagepub.com/content/early/2013/10/11/1748048513504166.full.pdf+html>

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The stations, especially those with smaller transmitters, tend to blame their failure to attract advertising on their being small stations. They complain of being under-looked by advertisers seeking to reach a wider audience. They claim that their stations are shunned by the usually lucrative government-funded public campaigns even when they provide free airtime slots. The tendency to compare themselves and try to compete with bigger commercial stations has made them and their staff succumb a tendency of their services being secondary yet they offer better options for the community served. Related to the above the community broadcasters have been overshadowed by commercial players who do not belong to the community category but can afford the latest broadcasting technology and use local language which ends up grabbing the attention of the very community they community radios are reaching out. Thus denying the community from benefiting on development issues meant for them, Javuru agree with the above a close analysis reveals that these powerful broadcasters often give less priority to development community content.¹⁸

2.5 Small can be better

Almost every district has on average two radio stations. The temptation for community radios to imitate commercial radios in content and win the approval of advertisers and audiences in this over-commercialized context is becoming irresistible. However, despite this competitive environment community radio stations can still remain relevant but only when distinguished by their niche community-oriented and led content.

Community stations have to overcome this secondary contrivance and find more creative ways to stay afloat. They need to ask themselves why they are community stations in the first place and build stronger brands, packages and re-brand around their unique identity and mission. Some stations have had to be innovative to sustain community-oriented broadcasts.

18 Javuru Op. Cit 2011

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For example, KKCR which has not received any major donor funding since 2006 has, in addition to standard advertising rate for big advertisers, adopted a “fit all pockets rate” for community members wishing to have content or announcements broadcast. Community members and small business owners can come and broadcast their own adverts or announcements in their own words and voices. Community audiences are more inclined to believe adverts when heard from the “horse’s own mouth.” Any community member can bring an announcement or advert and earn a 5% commission.

Radio Buwama often organises community events to raise funds to buy essential equipment for the station. Similarly; besides saying it to their radio station, communities need to be rallied to support the stations. Social sustainability can help a station attain financial sustainability.

Mama fm is perhaps the best example of how modeling a community radio along concrete intervention in the communities can help win funding and sustain the station. Besides the initial funding from, UMWA which owns the station, radio managers have ensured that all station funded projects have a media component. Other funders have included Danida, Oxfam, International Solidarity Foundation, a Finnish NGO, Norwegian Women Family Association plus technical support from foreign radio stations such as Radio Orakel 99.3 FM in Oslo, a women station in Norway and Radio Robin Hood. Having their own stations means they do not have to spend a lot on the commercial media to reach their target audiences as is the case with other NGOs.

Other than the initial support to Mama fm, government, especially at central level, has not fulfilled policy commitments to ensure that community media is financially stable, especially after it scrapped the graduated tax to which the local sub-county authorities had added Shs1,000 per tax payer to sustain the community radio stations as noted from Nakaseke.

2.6 Community media network

In 2003, community radio stations came together to try and claim their space as a group and promote the growth of community media in Uganda. The seven radio stations formed and launched the Community Media Network Uganda (COMNETU) with support from UMWA and Uganda Development Service (UDS). The mission is to provide a platform for community media in Uganda and enhance the operating environment through dialogue with government, civil society and other stakeholders. The network is also trying to increase the visibility of community radio in the country.

2.6.1 Content: Articulating community issues

The three-tier system for broadcasting: public service, commercial and community, is meant to enhance media diversity and pluralism. Community media is made necessary by the need to provide to communities information that would ordinarily not be available in the mainstream media and to remote areas that may not attract commercial media.

2.6.2 A channel for community voices

Community radio has been defined as “by and for the community” in its ownership, management and content aspects.¹⁹ The latter calls for a high level of community participation to enable radio perform its social mobilization role. Through participation and channeling voices, communities drive the content, making it reflective of their respective challenges, aspirations and initiatives for socio-economic change.

19. Myers M. (2011) *Voices from Villages: Community Radio in the Developing World*. (also see): Monj., R, & Smurthwait, M. *The Healthy Community Radio Station* <http://www.osisa.org/book/export/html/4948>

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In addition to hosting community members in the studios, all the seven community stations do outside recording. Some such as Buwama fm use phones to broadcast live community events and sub-county council proceedings. The balance of these programming formats is often dependent on resource availability. Studio talk-shows and discussion formats, while convenient for the stations, come with a cost for community members who reside far. Their participation is dependent on affordability of transport. Women are inhibited further by security concerns since they have to walk long distances in the night and through bushy paths to and after participating in late radio programmes.²⁰ As a result, better resourced local politicians, who seek to maximise power at any cost, tend to dominate live programmes and those recorded at the stations.²¹ This erodes the independence of some community stations to provide balanced programming on political issues.

In comparison to the other stations, KKCR has a more integrated community development approach, using radio to supplement other interpersonal and training interventions both at the URDT campus and centres in the communities. A study carried out in 2009 established that KKCR played a leading role in the promotion of human rights in Kibaale district. Up to 86 % of the respondents said they receive human rights information on KKCR; while 60% said they came to know the human rights office in the district through KKCR and many opt to seek advice from the station.²²

Community radio, not to sound abstract, works best when integrated with service delivery or advocacy in the communities. Community radio stations owned by entities that do not provide service delivery need to partner with NGOs and CBOs in the communities.

20. Ssemujju, B Ibid

21. Lukanda, I. (2010) Can community radio survive the onslaught of commercialization? A comparative study of Kagadi-Kibale fm community radio and Kfm (MA thesis)

22 Kyomuhendo B. P. (2009) The Role of Kagadi Kibaale Community Radio in Promotion of Human Rights, A case

2.6.3 Censorship

Besides lack of a supportive environment, community stations share in the censorship hazards experienced by the other tiers of broadcasting; commercial and public broadcasting. The ban on bimeeza (live open forum broadcasts) in 2009 affected community radio stations most. The format was cost-effective, and enabled more people to participate in radio dialogue within their community settings. Like commercial stations, some community members from the political opposition have been barred from speaking on some community radio stations.²³

2.7 Community radio in the Information Communication Technology era

Community stations in Uganda are increasingly embracing new information and communication technologies (ICT). Studios have been computerized. For example, sub-county (LC3) council meetings are broadcast live using mobile phones, giving the communities a chance to follow ongoing debate and decision making by their representatives in chamber.

Mobile phones have also enabled more community members to participate in live radio programmes by calling-in and giving instant feedback. Digital recorders are used to gather content from the community, allowing members to participate directly in community dialogue. The CMCs (telecentres) are equipped with ICT facilities which are shared with the respective community radio stations.

Lack of computer skills remains a perpetual problem due to the high turnover of volunteer broadcasters who have benefited from computer literacy.

23 Ssemujju, B.Ibid

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The internet too has been embraced by community stations. The stations use it to search for information, especially on farming and health. The majority of the community stations have websites and Face-book pages although they need to be improved and made more interactive. The high cost of access and utilization of the internet especially in the rural areas equally works as a gap. Many of the rural areas do not have access to internet due to the high costs involved and this is exasperated by the instabilities in electricity supply and lack of infrastructure.

3.0 Recommendations

Community radios in Uganda have to overcome funding hurdles if they must retain their original community service mission. Trying to imitate commercial radio in order to win the approval of advertisers is not in their best interest in the long run. Instead they need to believe in themselves, win recognition from the communities and NGOs working in the communities and prove their relevance. To grow the community radio space in the country, NGOs need to recognize the potential of radio in their work and invest in them too. Starting community radio stations or partnering with existing ones can help NGOs and CSOs engage communities better.

Media training institutions should partner with community radio stations and promote them as facilities for internship for communications students, who can in turn train more volunteers in computer literacy and basic broadcast skills. Community radios need to constantly keep in tune with changes in the communities, become more attractive by widening programming to include segments on locally-sourced entertainment as well as making content youth-friendly. Last but not least, community radio stations need to network, strategise better and claim their space and increase their visibility by being innovative in their programs.

4.0 Conclusion

Community radios have attempted to serve the purpose of providing accurate information to the communities. By the fact that most of them use local language they score high because the beneficiaries receive first hand information. That notwithstanding there is need to mix both English and the local language for the radios that are stationed within the metropolitan area like Mama fm because not all women understand Luganda, in addition the community radios need to be gender sensitive you find Mama fm women participate more than men and other radios the men dominate which effects the intention of inclusiveness and participation of community radio. The media policies have been used to facilitate development but at times they are also used as a punitive tool to curb on dissent opinions. That said; community radios should not deceit from being live to the stiff competitions that they face but make their being community a competing edge to innovate programs that can keep the community listenership and contribute towards the running of the station.


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