The Relevance of Integrating Models of Radio into Development Process

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Abstract

The recent re-democratisation process that has taken place on the African continent is paving the way for the mass media to operate within an environment, which favours the strengthening of this transitional process. What is even more notable in some African countries is the legislative backing for freedom of expression and the encouragement of private individuals and local communities to set up and operate electronic media. What this means is that governments are gradually realizing that development initiatives can be facilitated when they are backed up with a strong communication dimension. In fact, free and independent media and freedom of expression are basic conditions in any new democracy. However, the concentration of the mass media in the urban areas has led to inadequate attention or neglect by governments for the communication needs of rural folk and the poor living in the peripheries of cities. Complicating the situation is the high rate of illiteracy, which constitutes a big hurdle to efforts aimed at enhancing development. However, the welcoming development of the current role being played by fledgling community and educational radio in development in Africa calls for appropriate and adequate strategic planning and guidelines on programmes, which are well suited to models of radio capable of supporting development. Therefore, the aim of the review is to delineate those factors that can influence a model of community and educational radio capable of facilitating development through community participation.

Key words: Community and Educational Radio, Community Participation, Development Initiatives, Facilitation, Models of Radio

Introduction

In the decade of the sixties, there were for the most part only mainstream media. Community media as they are known today did not exist, or were an extremely minor part of the media landscape (UNESCO, 1994: 3). However, with the adoption of the United National General Assembly resolution in November 1996, which underlined the key role of communication for development as an instrument of dialogue between the citizen and the public powers and the encouragement planners and decision makers at all levels to include "communication" components in their development programme and projects, community radio is assuming an important role in influencing the lives of marginalized communities (Boafo, 2000: 70).

However, it should be put on record that the pioneering experiences from which today's community radio has evolved began some 50 years ago in Latin America. Poverty and social injustices were the stimulus for those first experiences, one beginning in Bolivia in 1947, and known as the Miner's radio and another in Colombia the same year known as the Radio Sutatenza/Accion Cultural Popular. All the same, even if the groundbreaking work was in Latin America, it was in Europe that community radio first became a vital phenomenon, an alternative to – or a critique of – mainstream broadcast media (Fraser & Estrada, 2001: 6). In Africa, the first community radio station was the Homa Bay community Radio station in Kenya, which started in May 1982. The project was an initiative by the Kenyan government and UNESCO. However, in 1984 the Kenyan government closed it down (Opoku-Mensah, 2000: 167).

Community radio stations are expanding at a fast pace. Fraser and Estrada (2001: 11) reported that UNESCO followed its experience in Kenya and Sri Lanka with support to other stations in a wide variety of countries, among them Ghana, Jamacia, Trinidad and Tobago, the Philippines and many others. Apart from UNESCO, a wide range of international development agencies and national and international NGOs are now involved in many parts of the world.

Radio in support of development in the third world has much in common with a significant strand of community radio in North America and Australia that provided for their communities by native Canadians in the north, and the aboriginal Australians. In such areas a traditional economy, culture, and language have all but destroyed and local radio has an important part to play in discovering the past and making sense of a present which, if it cannot turn back history, at least can assert historical rights and claims (Lewis & Booth 1989: 185).

There is a build-up of empirical research pointing to how community radio can be a positive force for development in as much as it allows that active participation of community groups not only in its programming by most importantly in the institutional structure of the radio station (Alumuku, 2008, Fairchild, 2001, Fraser & Estrada, 2001). According to Midgley (1986), participation is the best way to overcome deprivation and impoverishment. Participation in radio offers the potential to be correctional, processional, and inclusionary. The argument in support of community radio initiatives and its potential to empower communities for development is upheld by Diedong & Naaikuur (2012). Research has proved that there are dividends in applying categories of alternatives to formal education through radio broadcasting (Nicaragua, 1975). Therefore, the importance of integrating models of radio into the development process cannot be over-emphasized.

Community Radio in the Broadcasting Landscape

Broadcasting can be divided into three general categories, namely public-service broadcasting, which is generally conducted by a statutory entity, which is usually, though not necessarily a state-supported or a state-owned corporation. Commercial or private broadcasting provides programmes designed primarily for profit from advertising revenue and is owned and controlled by private individuals, or by commercial enterprise. The third, community broadcasting is non-profit service that is owned and managed by a particular community, usually through a trust, foundation, or association. Its aim is to serve and benefit that community (Fraser & Estrada 2001:3).

This categorization is similar to the three general types of local radio that can be indentified in Western Europe (McCain & Lowe 1990: 86-90) namely, national, independent and community. National radio is characterized by the public service broadcast ethos, while independent radio radio operates in the "markets forces" model of broadcasting, with licensed and illegal stations competing for listeners and advertising revenue. The third types, community radio stations, are broadcasting hybrids that can be characterized according to whether they define community geographically or in terms of value orientations.

"Community" is defined as any group whose members can be characterized as sharing an agenda of relatively widespread common interest and who recognize among themselves any more or less commonly held notions, related values, identification, practices and needs. Communities are often, but necessarily, confined to discrete and limited geographical area. However, Karikari (Boafo, 2000: 44) pointed out that developments in public and "local" radio systems indicate that definitions of community in mass communication discourses are not static. They seem to be influenced more by the purposes, or specifically the character of the audience for whom media are intended. This could be a community of people residing in a particular geographic locally or a population sharing a particular social, economic, cultural or political interest, vision or aspiration. AMARC (the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters) has put a stamp of acceptability to this dual character of community and endorsed the definition that the term could mean "a geographically based group of persons and/or a social group or sector of the public who have common or specific interest.

Community radio is thus a social process or event in which members of the community associate together to design programmes and produce and air them, thus taking on the primary role actors in their destiny, whether this be for something as common as mending fences in the neighborhood, or a community-wide campaign on how to use clean water and keep it clean, or agitation for the elections of new leaders (Fraser & Estrada, 2000:1). How does a community radio arise? It often arises as response to a perception that commercial radio cannot serve the needs of small populations. It is valued for its ability to correct the distortions inherent in majority controlled media. The notion of community "[reproduces] at the local level the same claim for consensus as does 'nation' on a larger scale" (Lewis, 1984:137-149).

One of the two key issues for all three types of local radio is empowerment, or opportunities for local access and control. What does it mean to have access to broadcast facilities and perhaps audience? Hein (1988) argues that involvement is the overarching concept. Access, participation, and self-management are the hierarchical stage in community involvement, with access allowing for citizen input but not for responsibility for station maintenance or management.

Community radio has the task of striving to end the isolation of the individual participants from social learning and production processes. The central role of the community radio station is as a public institution where access to information does not simply equal access to liberation, but access to a larger polity that only makes itself through the steady amplification of its social voice. What can emerge is what Jakubowics calls a "representative communicative democracy" where "all segments of society do or can – without hindrance – own or control their own media or have adequate access to the" (Fairchild, 2001: 95).

The second key issue in local radio is financing. With community radio adequate funding is a problem however as is the difficulty of sustaining interest and commitment by large non-salaried staff. As regards integration of the model of radio into the development process, they all contribute in different ways. National local radio stations provide a local link to the national system and provide grassroots news services. The independent radio provides marketing. Community radio stations provide a vital horizontal link to the cities they serve.

Minority group and neglected cultural enclaves need the opportunity to air their views and discuss problems. Writing about the first wave of ethnic radio in London, Jankowski (2002) indicated the prominence these stations give to "community discourse." Ethnic community media are involved in the process of ethnic community definition. They have to (and indeed they do) appeal to ethnic community self definition and they profess to cater to the needs, culture, experience, and values of the communities they address. On the other hand, they are engaged in the process of minority community redefinition, as they need to appeal to a viable audience. They do so by often attempting to redraw cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic boundaries that separate sections of their envisaged audience and cultural identify of a population that political and economic factors have put in a threatened position. Community radio stations do not have to be slickly professional or have elaborate hardware. The quality of a community radio depends on people talking to people, about people, events, and things for the betterment of their lives.

Although each type of local radio considered satisfies a different set of needs, most situations require all three legal types if innermost needs are to be satisfied. (McCain & Lowe 1990: 95-98). Fairchild (2001:96) argued for the need for diversity in the services, which the general categories of radio station offer. Jankowski (2002: 24) supported that assertion pointing out that small-scale forms of public communication are important because they are not necessarily aimed at a confrontation with the establishment, but at trying to create a local forum for articulation and discussion. Their presence and effective operation is needed since the established national and regional media, that is press and broadcasting, due to their institutionalized character, cannot or will not cater to such specific audiences and local topics. This condition has resulted in community media and small-scale forms of public communication becoming important in the local community.

Moemeka (1994:125-137; White 1983:5 & McAnany, 1973:28) had described five different models for radio:

1. **Open Broadcasting**. It is the strategy in which broadcast messages are directed to an unorganized audience. It is based on the assumption that a "good" and relevant message is capable of being accepted. McAnany (1978,138) referred to Gunder and Theroux as indicating that open broadcast strategy enables more people to have access to information and vicarious education.
2. **Instructional Radio**. It is directed at an organized learning group, with someone able to supervise and direct as well elicit feedback. It operates on the principle of cooperation and guided listening. There is usually cooperation between broadcaster and educationist.
3. **Rural Radio forum**. It is the strategy for using radio with discussion and decision for rural groups. The sense of involvement which this strategy engenders in the rural communities as a result of its demand for some action-decision by the group is a great asset in development effort.
4. **Radio schools**. It is the most widespread strategy for using radio for rural community education in Latin America. The basic aim of this strategy is to offer fundamental, integral education, which goes beyond mere reading writing and cognitive skills.
5. **Radio and Animation**. It is a strategy which aims at promoting among local communities a trained cadre of decisive leaders. The strategy places emphasis on radio defining, but not suggesting, solutions to people's problem.

Each model has its strengths and weakness. The ideal strategy - the local radio strategy, combines the qualities of all models. It utilizes their inherent and operational advantages and strengthens its position by eliminating their detected deficiencies. If this strategy is to have a better chance of success, there is a strong need for proximity of radio stations to the rural audiences, and localization of programme materials.

It is important to point out the distinction between community radio and the local radio. Even the smallest and simplest radio station serving a community with a five-mile radius can be as vertically one-way oriented as a national network. The key to genuine community radio is participation or at least the real possibility thereof (White, 1983:1).

Fairchild (2001) reported that there are innumerable communities of interests, not all of whom can be or want be served by a particular station; many simply have no interest in community media and many, possibly the majority, may be satisfied by the dominant media culture. The relevance of the respective programmes of these different radio stations to their audiences cannot be underestimated. As reported by Johnston and Clark (1982: 266) throughout the history of development, individual programme actions have exhibited both complementary and completive effects on one another. This suggests the desirability of a strategic perspective from which packages of programmes mutually adjusted to one another's requirements, strengths and weakness can be more readily perceived and designed. It should be indicated that before any meaning communication programmes are designed for the benefit of the community, it is important to know why people at the grassroots do not get the information they need.

The Problem of Access to Information at the Grassroots

Rural communities cannot afford to buy and maintain information carriers like radio receivers and newspapers. Consequently, the villages depend heavily on traditional forms of communication, which are limited in scope for modern development purpose (Kivikuru, 1994: 17). McAnany (1980; 4) rightly observed that almost every activity - agricultural extension, credit, marketing, local farmer participation, training - considered vital to rural development is information-related or information-dependent in some way. In extension for example, the agent is the source of the new information.

However, in most of the third world, these agents are in such short supply that they reach a fraction of the farmers or usually the rich ones. Still, there they may be other ways local participation when it is a built-in goal of a project can be promoted by both interpersonal and mediated communication. McAnany (1980) argued for paying increased attention to this aspect of rural development. This should not be taken to mean that communication can be substituted completely for other resources. However, a better mix of material and information resources can achieve a better result, perhaps at a lower cost (McAnany, 1980:5).

Another factor, which hinders the access of people to information at the grassroots, is the lack of reading materials. As a result of this problem, the few functional literates relapse into illiteracy though they might have successfully followed literacy programmes to enhance their social skills to make them more productive. The root cause of the non-availability of the post-literacy activities is the dearth of consistent incorporation into the national education policy goals of a culture of building functional library systems evenly spread out in the country. According to Lelage (1990:9), the creation of a literate environment is accepted as critical to the success of literacy programmes. Lelage (1990:6-9) noted that nowadays anyone planning a large-scale literacy venture will think in terms of follow-up reading, community newspaper and library expansion. However, the tragedy is that many countries, especially in the third world cannot easily make that provision.

Modern mass media, with the exception of radio, are almost non-existent. This leads analysts to one of several strategies in efforts to help the rural poor: (1) an attempt to use tradition media and networks to introduce new information and behaviorural change; (2) an attempt to place more information agents in the service institutions of agriculture education, and development: and/ or (3) an attempt to increase the availability of information through radio or other mass media if they can be more widely and equitably available (McAnany 1980:10).
Pandey (1991:159) stressed the need for evolving grassroots media as a tool for people to talk to each other with the intention of learning about and transforming their present situation. To ensure real access, such a process requires a ritual model of communication, which is not directed toward the extension of messages in time and space in order to influence, but the creation, representation, and celebration of shared belief and the local stories of the people. Carey's concept of the ritual model, which focuses on the image of communion, is much closer to the idea of access (Carey, 1977:412). Ideally, grassroots media should be controlled, produced and distributed by the people. Radio can be an appropriate and useful tool for education and development if set up in the community.

The Importance of Educational Radio in Development

The formal system of education in many low income countries share many or all of the following well-known problems:

(1) it has rising unit cost; (2) it provides relatively poor access for rural children; (3) it provides low quality instruction, with the frequent result that students from these countries acquire less cognitive slow response in providing education relevant to the development goals; (4) it exhibits slow response in providing education relevant to the development goals; (5) it has poorly designed educational policies which fail to take into account the realities and needs of learners, and (6) the distributional impact is regressive, often highly regressive. Radio has a significant role to play in development communication and can help create viable alternatives and complements to formal schooling (McAnany, 1978:3).

According to Bates (1984:15) whatever the origins for setting up a radio service, it is not difficult to find valid justification for using it for education or development purpose, once it is there. Bates (1984: 15-16) noted that there are three broad political objectives in the use of broadcasting in education. The first justifies the use of television and radio for improvement within the formal education system, the target groups being those already in full-time education at college. The second political perspective justify the use of television and radio by arguing that it can equalize or spread widely educational opportunities beyond the formal school and college system - what McAnany and Mayo (1979) called "the democratisation of educational opportunities" beyond the formal school and college system through part-time, off campus education for those outside the normal age range or geographical reach of the basic and college system. The third approach justifies the use of television and radio by arguing that they can be used as a revolutionary force, to bring about radical changes in the social structure and in the mobilization of the poor and oppressed. The aim here is to bypass the powerful elites, appealing directly to "the people."

The miner's radio in Bolivia provided solid evidence of the third approach. In normal times of democracy the radios linked the miners' union and its members; when the country and the workers face a military coup, the stations formed a network of resistance against the approaching forces, broadcasting decision made at public and organizational meetings and allow union criticism. Finally, in times of military control, when the stations are closed, they are a focus of underground organizing and people demand their return to the airwaves. Their unions are involved in everything from daily life to international politics and the radio stations are a part of the everyday cultural resistance (O'Connor, 1990:104).

The aims of school broadcasting are laudable. It is to use television and radio to reinforce the content, skills or attitudes that teachers are already committed to imparting to their pupils or students. This might be done by improving the motivation to learn by making the topic more interesting or relevant, by providing a wider or more realistic content. However, in most developing countries, it rarely has been the intention within the formal education system to use broadcasting to replace the teachers, or even to reduce staff/pupil ratios; rather television and radio are seen as an extra resource on which the schools and colleges can draw if they wish. The programme supplements and reinforces the existing curriculum (Bates, 1984: 15-19).

White (1976) had reported on the rapid expansion of radio schools in southern Honduras. In analyzing the effectiveness and relevance of the literacy, health, and agricultural education programmes of the Popular Promotion Movement (PPM), White highlighted the importance for the radio school systems of having some initial cooperation from local community leadership and the support of an auxiliary supervisory and promotional system at the district and regional level, such as a peasant association, or systems of co-operation. The radio schools expanded rapidly in southern Honduras due to the communication linkage systems of the local religious organizations and the interest of the rural parishes in improving the situation of the rural, lower-status compesinos (small farmers). The initiative of the Catholic diocese in setting up a leadership-training centre, opening a regional radio station was a useful contribution. The invitation of other development agencies to use the system was also an important factor (White, 1976: 39-40).

McAnany (1978:138-139) reviewed four cases where radio has achieved its goal with special success. The four examples follow: (1) the Kenya Health broadcasts (UNICEF 1975); (2) the nutrition radio campaigns (Manhoff, 1975); (3) the Gautemala agricultural-information prgrammes (AED, 1976), and (4) the Tanzanian radio campaigns (Hall & Dodds, 1974). The first three cases illustrate several points; that radio can play a role in such important development areas as health, nutrition, and agricultural productivity; that it can attract a wide audience and gets its message across without necessarily organizing its audience; that in two of the cases it affects behaviour; and further that this been done at a reasonable cost.

In the case of southern Honduras, White (1976) reported on how the adaptation of the conscientisation method to agricultural education yielded some good results.

Agronomists and paraprofessionals were organized to meet with promoters of the local study groups usually once a month, normally at the site of a demonstration plot, for an instructional talk on the current major projects of the groups, to answer questions regarding problems, and to engage in an analytic discussion of the problems and progress of the demonstration plot. A daily radio program followed the production cycle of the agricultural projects of the groups in the region. The broadcasts were often interviews with local groups on the groups in the region. The broadcasts were often interviews with local groups on the innovative methods they have used, reports by paraprofessional instructions, or discussions of questions written by groups. The programme was used to announce meetings in communities, courses, prices of suppliers and marketing, and other PPM news. There was also a series of very simple leaflets and pamphlets adapted to the farming capabilities and the literacy level of most semi-subsistence farmers. This kind of agricultural education has contributed to the development of a new rural culture and an economically dynamic rural sector (White, 1976:140-142).

This evidence would seem to suggest that most countries could make better use of a national resource like radio to pursue important development goals. The least which community radio demands is that both listeners and programme producers (whether employers or volunteers) have a say in the direct running of the station and in the content and format of programmes. However, in addition, the need for a more effective framework of communication with lower-status groups and rural communities for social change requires the adoption of a multi-media approach of communication.

Radio in a Multi-Media Approach

What is sometimes overlooked is that for radio to become a medium for active seeking of information, for education, for personal religious growth, or for bringing about social changes, other media must support it. For example, the radio schools in Spain and Latin America have been an effective alternative form of education and social change but the effectiveness has depended largely on a combination of radio with print media discussion groups, interpersonal contacts, and action groups. The production of video documentaries by these action groups also has been an important factor for enhancing social change (White, 2000: 179-180).

The typical components of a multi-media approach are the following:

- A regular broadcast, usually at least once a week, from a central place where the coordinating organization is located, and which becomes a symbol of the whole movement.
- The use of printed materials- a textbook, study sheets, or pamphlets- that are distributed to the participants on a regular basis, and which are closely coordinated with the broadcasts, so that the listeners can read in greater depth and with more reflection, what is presented in the live broadcast.
- Regular weekly or fortnightly personal contacts with a representative of the broadcast organization in the local neighbourhood, to raise personal questions and present difficulties in understanding the broadcasts and the printed materials.
- Discussion groups of 10-12 students or listeners in the local area, led by the local representative of the sponsoring organization acting as an “animator.” The discussions permit more open reflections about values, personal opinions, and attitudes, or social problems that call for more involvement and action. The discussion groups supply the dimension of value and attitude change.
- Action groups (often the same people are the discussion groups) which are formally constituted as a local organization, and which are committed to carrying out programmes for personal self-improvement of their members, for improvement of the group. These groups are more likely to function effectively if the tasks of the personal tutor dimension are well designed and carried out. A major function is to arrange to meet personally with each participant at regular intervals, to respond to personal questions and problems. Every participant in a programme has unique talents and needs personal attention at some time. Another important function is to act as the animator for the “conscientising” discussion group.
- The use of group media such as sound-slide productions, video, or socio-drama that are usually produced by the group to represent “dramatically” the problems they are facing in order to enhance their understanding.
- Since the broadcast link with this constituency is often a focused instruction programme or genre designed for the needs and goals of this programme, the participants also need a much broader, full-service range of information. Some educational or broadcast organizations run a series of “enrichment” entertainment programmes that can complement the focused educational programmes. These components in no way exhaust all the range of combinations.

What is worthy of note is that whichever components are adopted, they should be creatively implemented taking into consideration the situational needs, interests, and concerns of the targeted audience.

The description of White (1976:100) of the Radio Santa Maria innovative education model sheds light on how these components can operate in a concrete situation. According to White (1976), the model provides an interesting extension of the idea of "integral education". Radio Santa Maria attempted to combine six different learning experiences, which would response to every facet of the human personality and contribute to a balance personal development: (a) extensive printed material; (b) broadcast classes; (c) personal guidance by the field teacher; (d) group discussion; (e) broader educational and cultural programming; and (f) participation in community organizations. Ideally, the Radio Santa Maria system teaches young students how to combine various learning experiences and how to attack the problem of integrating a series of learning experience throughout a lifetime.

The feasibility of the implementation of the multi-media approach to education is corroborated by the work of the Foundation for Rural Development through school Radio (FREDER) in Chile. The social impact of FREDER comes from an interesting combination of three complementary forms of communication: (1) radio broadcasting; (2) written communication as a means of reinforcing broadcasts, especially the foundation's educational courses (printed brochures were specifically created for the targeted audience of the region); and (3) direct oral communication through educators and monitors who visit or reside in peasant communities. Because all of these forms are related to the same goal, it is not possible to discuss radio broadcasting in isolation from the personal interaction sponsored by the foundation. The basic methodology applied was interactive and participatory and included discussions after the group had listened to the radio programme. The education programmes of FREDER were received with enthusiasm and repeated for several years (Colle, 1992: 127 & 137). If the multi-media approach to education has to function effectively, there is the need for action groups to be mobilized and guided in a non-directive manner by animators to enable all the participants to unearth their talents and skills for their empowerment.

However, Bate reported (1984: 88) that McAnany criticized the radio school movement in Latin America for their over emphasis on literacy at the expense of more functional and practical approaches, their deliberate avoidance of direct action (or "interference") in community affairs, their under-financing and poor management, and their lack of feedback into the production. Above all, McAnnany feared that the radio schools are perhaps inadvertently merely keeping the compesinos (subsistence farmers) satisfied with their underprivileged position in society, a fear supported by White's study (1973): "An Evaluation of the Rural Development Potential of the Radio School Movement in Honduras." One of White's (1973) conclusions was that adult education on its own is inadequate to bring about the necessary improvements in the economic productivity and political effectiveness of the compesinos movements - structural changes in the base, need to come first.

It should be pointed out that while structural and social changes are almost certainly needed in many of the societies where radio has been used for rural development, many of the difficulties of mass adult education in rural areas would still remain even if structural change were to take place. The balance of the evaluation, however, suggested that radio, combined with group activity, still can be a potent educational force for rural development.

Functions of Action Groups in a Multi-Media Process

In the case of White's study (2000) the major functions of action groups were to prepare the participants and students, who were often people from marginal backgrounds to be active in building the culture and history of their nation. The participation in organizational activities is also a training ground of many skills that are not learned through the radio, print and other dimensions: leadership; the capacity to administer organizations; an understanding of processes of government and politics in a country and the principles for building a solid people's movement (White, 2000:190). For example, in a course on socio-cultural problems such as female genital mutilation (a current health problem in some parts of Ghana and Africa) and after a class on abusive cultural prejudices against women, the questions would be posed to the members: What can we do in this community about negative cultural practices against women? This would presuppose a radio class in which instruction has been presented about what people can do to stop this had been presented. The group then discusses what THEY can do to stop this.

The group needs to be led by an "animator" who does not participate, but enable all to participate and promotes dialogue between all participants in a non-directive manner.

The purpose of the discussion is to discover the causes of the problem the group is facing and to propose a solution as a basis for action. All discussion should lead toward a clear plan of action and a consensus decision of the group to carry out the plan of action.

This group process presupposes the presence of a chief animator of group who should be a person who has some training and experience in animation of group consciousness-raising. Ideally, all chief animators should have training on the course, "Training for Transformation" or a similar course (White 2002). According to Hope and Timmel, (1984: 5; & White 1999) the role of animator is to help community members discover and use all their potential for creative and constructive teamwork. The word - animator means "one who gives new spirit and life to a group." An animator needs all the skills of a facilitator but the animator also has a special responsibility to stimulate people to: To think critically; Identify problems and Find new solutions.

The animator challenges the groups to look at the cause of and the consequences of the facts they are considering. For this (s) he may need a code to focus everyone's attention immediately on the same problems (for example, gender discrimination, a hidden conflict, a lack of information, a power struggle), and a careful plan to help the group move progressively from one step to the next up to a stage for a decision to be made to carry out a concrete action. Depending upon the nature of the problem being tackled, an organization could be formed to carry out the decision and linkages established with other groups.

The review of literature on action groups has some evidence of how from very humble beginnings, action groups grew and developed into productive organizations with well-designed communication structures. White (1976: 99) reported that the homemakers' clubs in southern Honduras developed a regionally based daily promramme, which was directed to specific projects and problems of the clubs. Letters to the programme were discussed, the supervisor reported on innovative projects of a particular women's group or presented tape recorded visits to some particular communities, and leaders of particular groups came into the station to speak to all of the clubs. The radio was a horizontal and vertical dialogue between participants.

The visual (video, pictures) dimension of the multi-media approach is important in group action. Riano (1994: 13) reported on how women have through their initiation used a variety of media such as cassette forum to present material of community interest. Participants were encouraged to interact with the tape and share their views with the forum. Other communication media used are cartoons, which provide material for reflection and discussion, sound slide, which involve women in theme identification; research and script development; photography; and so on.

Video productions of informational programmes are being used widely by women to deconstruct some of the false and negative symbolic representation of women in the mass media. Rodriguez (2001: 122-124) reported that in Colombia, through participatory video production projects women's groups try to break what programmers consider as "televisable." The collective redefines its identity during the process shifting power roles and creating new self-images and relationship. Riano (1994: 19) supported the use of such a video strategy, pointing out that it is at the level of the grassroots where women's competencies, capabilities, and community communication roles are generated and that it is the realm of everyday life where people's communications systems are elaborated. From a methodological perspective in communication production (networking), to place the grassroots at the centre implied the dissolution of the control; exercised by "the maker" in message construction and narrative language. Instead, the conception of the communication process as a circular process, activating understanding and perceptions at the grassroots is introduced.

The development potential of multi-media approach cannot be underestimated because multi-media are vital means for educating people. At one village, a farmer declared that he could now make compost manure after following the instructions he read in the farmers' magazine called *Mkulima*. Apart from this educational role, community media have helped to bridge the gap between the village and the district or regional administrators. There are cases where district officials have reacted to village problems after reading about them in the newsletters. Even more significant is the fact that problems that had existed for years are now being highlighted in the local media. People gradually realize that self-help is the ideal way of bringing about development (Kivikuru, 1994:27).What is therefore important about groups producing their own media (that is, citizens' media) is not what these citizens do with them, but how participation in these media experiments affects citizens and their communities.

So even if the information and communication channels are left untouched, even if the mainstream media structure is left unaltered, citizens' media are rupturing pre-established power structure, opening spaces that allow for new social identities and new cultural definitions, and in a word generating power on the side of the subordinate (Rodriguez, 2001:160). It is evident that the potential of multi-media approach can be realized if community radio stations develop workable methods of communication strategies with well mobilised groups in order to facilitate development activities in the communities.

Conclusion

Having reviewed some of the unique characteristics of community and educational radio, there are indications that they can facilitate the process of implementation of various development projects and programmes ranging from education, agriculture and health. In many African countries, even though the macro-political and economic environment, which in turn has made community radio possible, without efficiently decentralized structures such as peasant associations/local organisations, and local non-governmental organizations, which are becoming more common in the region, many community radio stations would not have a basis on which to exist (Myers, 2000: 101, Uphoff, 1984).

Despite the fact that community radio in Africa may have programmes on adult education, health, agriculture and other relevant social topics for lower-status groups, many of these are still being created by professionals in the studio without the direct participation of marginalized groups and other stakeholders in programming, planning, designing and implementation. The need for peoples' active participation in development initiatives in their communities cannot be over-emphasised. A well integrated model of radio broadcasting can facilitate the efforts of communities in realizing the goals of development. As the literature (Bouhafa, 1997; Kivikuru, 1994; Diedong & Naaikuur, 2012) confirmed, the extent to which the potential of community radio broadcasting for community empowerment can be realized is directly related to the extent to which the community participates in the management, and therefore the content of the material that is broadcast.

The study established the need for action to be taken by community radio stations in Africa and other developing countries to move out of the studio and reach out to the different types of action groups such as farmers' cooperatives and women associations as well as change agents working in extension service at grassroots in order to give tangible expression to the sense of community participation in radio. It is when community participation is encouraged that the sustainability of community radio is somehow guaranteed. The various models of radio in operation require a measure of integration, especially in the rural areas to make their services more useful. In fact, some of them, particularly community radio would survive if they are truly popular with the local people through channels created for community members to actively participate in broadcasting.

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